

Defenders of Realms: The Archaic Kings(RotBTD)

by Kyra Tuiama

Category: How to Train Your Dragon, Rise of the Guardians

Genre: Adventure, Friendship

Language: English

Characters: Hiccup, Jack Frost

Status: Completed

Published: 2013-09-07 16:32:21

Updated: 2013-11-02 06:36:52

Packaged: 2016-04-26 16:01:39

Rating: T

Chapters: 12

Words: 24,231

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: Pitch Black has allied himself with Alvin the Treacherous, and together the two have conquered Berk. Hiccup returns to take back his home with Jack Frost, Merida and Rapunzel. But now, the four of them will have to face their destinies, and become important players in a war that will decide the fate of all of their worlds.

1. Return to Berk

****Reading the previous installments are not needed to understand this story. Simply read the italics, which will give you a quick look at what the world of this fanfiction looks like. and you'll be good to go. **Unless you're old readers, then you can skip the italics.**

Also, this story will lean towards the HTTYD book series, since I noticed it's sometimes ignored in this fandom. This is the third and final part of the series. I have no continuation of any kind planned.

Disclaimer: I do not own any of the four franchises(How to Train Your Dragon, Rise of the Guardians, Brave and Tangled) included. All of them go to their respective original creators(who are awesome).

****Previously:****

_ Man in Moon had tasked Jack Frost with forming the Defenders of Realms, a group of warriors from each of the Four Worlds to fight against Pitch Black and other dark forces. Jack is given the Core Compass, a device that will allow him to cross the Worlds. Early on in his journey, Jack recruits Hiccup Horrendous Haddock the Third, the descendant of North's(Santa) old companion-Grimbeard the Ghastly-from Berk and his dragon, Toothless. But as they leave, Hiccup's arch nemesis, Alvin the Treacherous declares war on Berk and successfully conquers it in Hiccup's absence with the help of

Pitch._

_ After saving Merida, Hiccup is given Grimbeard's sword christened Endeavour and learns that he is a candidate, along with Alvin, to become King of the Wilderwest, ruler of the islands from his home world. He takes Grimbeard's Memoirs and the sword. Soon, Rapunzel from the Kingdom of Corona in the Fourth World also joins our heroes.

_

_ Shortly after, the team is attacked by Pitch who easily defeats them, severely wounds Hiccup and captures Toothless. The dragon is left in Gothel's care as Hiccup wakes up and he and his friends resolve to become stronger, each of them take up their own training regimes. Hiccup learns swordfighting while Rapunzel learns to use a whip. _

_ Three months later, the Defenders finish up their training and head to DunBroch to search for Toothless. However, Jack and Merida encounter Gothel and while they drive her away, the Core Compass is broken. After it is fixed by the Witch, the Compass gains a mind of it's own, and after Hiccup and Toothless have been reunited, transports our heroes to Jack's world while Gothel is killed by Pitch. _

_ Upon arriving in his world, Jack learns that Jamie is in trouble, and he and his friends manage a successful rescue mission. Meanwhile, back on Berk, Astrid and the other viking teenagers, upon hearing news of the outcome of the battle of the Defenders, realizes that Hiccup is planning to return soon, and start planning their counterstrike against Alvin. _

****Chapter One: Return to Berk****

Santa's workshop was bustling with life. Elves ran around the place eating cookies and playing around with flashy Christmas lights. The Yetis muttered to themselves as they were about working on the toys for the children of the world.

Jack Frost nimbly slipped in between the busy workers, careful not to known over any red and blue toys that the Yetis have worked so hard painting.

"Excuse me," Jack would murmur occasionally. "Pardon me. Whoops. If you don't mind, I need to go through." The Winter Spirit made his way to one of the rooms on the lower floors of the workshop. The smell of fire and soot started to fill the air. Heat radiated from the room. Jack peered his head in.

Inside, the second-in-command of the Defenders of Realms had an apron tied onto him. There was the sharp sound of metal as the boy inside held it against a spinning wheel. Small sparks flew from the friction, some of them threatening to fall onto his feet.

"Still working, Hiccup?" Jack asked playfully.

Hiccup stopped sharpening and looked up from his sword. "Oh hey, Jack," he said, moving the blade away from the wheel. "Sorry, I'm kind of absorbed in the preparations. Just wanted to keep good old Endeavour sharp and ready to go."

Jack gave Hiccup a smirk. "You're anxious aren't you?"

"What, no!" Hiccup blurted in reply. "Anxious? I'm not anxious, why would I be anxious?"

Jack raised an eyebrow as he leaned on his staff. Hiccup sighed as he took off his apron and dumped it on a nearby table. "It's been over three months since I've been home, Jack. It's just that I have a bad feeling about this."

"You think it's Alvin?"

"Pitch too, probably. I just know that something happened while I was gone." Hiccup picked up a leather scabbard sitting beside the wheel and sheathed his sword. "But that's why we're going back." As he spoke, Hiccup attached the scabbard to his belt.

"You forgot 'facing your destiny'," Jack added. "You're the one who's going to have to fight Alvin, grind him into dragon nip or whatever you feed your dragons, and become King of the Wilderwest."

"Yeah, well," Hiccup began, his sarcastic tone returning as he walked towards the exit of the forge, "I don't exactly want to agree with destiny."

"Then what are you going to do?" Jack wondered as he followed Hiccup out of the forge.

"I don't know. I'll figure it out later."

They two boys stopped talking as they made their way to the elevator. Jack tapped the tip of his staff onto one of the switches on the panel. The device clicked before pulling the two of them upwards to the high platforms.

"What about you?" Hiccup suddenly asked. "Aren't you worried about having to face Pitch?"

"I have to face Pitch alright," said Jack, "but no one ever said I had to face him alone. Neither did the prophecy of you becoming King of the Wilderwest."

"A fight for a title like that is one-on-one," Hiccup murmured, dropping his shoulders. "I don't think you guys are allowed to interfere."

The two of them paused.

"We should stop thinking about the future," Jack suggested.

"Yes, yes we should."

The elevator stopped at one of the highest floors. It's doors opened up. Hiccup and Jack found themselves on a large balcony overlooking the workshop. On the floor was a pentagon, each of the corners a tribute to one of the Guardians with a symbol of the moon in the center of it all.

Standing beside the railing were the other four Guardians: North with his swords, the Tooth Fairy with Baby Tooth beside her, the Sandman

and the Easter Bunny. In front of them were two girls, one dressed in dark green and the other bright purple.

"Took you guys long enough," grinned Merida.

"It's about time we dragged Hiccup out of the forge," said Rapunzel, a smile adoring her face. Hiccup waved as he was about to greet his teammates when he was sent flying to the floor, a tongue licking over his face. Laughing, Hiccup got up and patted his dragon on the head.

"Alright, Toothless," said Hiccup. "I know you're excited. We're finally going back home."

"Are you sure we don't have to come with them?" Bunny asked, turning to North. "I'm not a hundred percent sure we can leave Pitch to these guys."

"I'm sure we can trust them," said Tooth. "Have you seen how many Nightmares they took care of last time? We couldn't even take on that many."

Sandy nodded in response. North laughed boisterously. "They will be fine, Bunny. Just leave it to Jack."

"I'd rather trust the skinny one."

"Hiccup?"

"Yeah, him."

"No need to worry about us," said Jack. "I've got the strongest team of warriors from the Four Worlds with me." He reached into his pocket and brought the Core Compass, a golden device that allowed them to cross between the Four Worlds. The Compass had been acting strangely ever since it was fixed by the Witch in DunBroch, as if it had a mind of it's own. It chose the destination of the Defenders, as if it was Fate's guidance herself.

A warm glow wrapped itself around the Defenders. Toothless stood next to his rider, his tail fully operational and all saddled up. Rapunzel had her whip on her belt. Merida had her quiver over her back, and the bow over her shoulder. Jack took one last look at North and the Guardians.

"We'll defeat Pitch for you," he said. "I'll prove to Man in Moon that he didn't make a mistake in choosing me as the leader of the Defenders of Realms."

North smiled sincerely. "You didn't have to prove anything to Manny. He already knows you are worthy. All of you."

There was a gentle flash, and the teenagers along with Toothless disappeared from the workshop. Bunny sighed. "It's going to be quiet around here without them around."

North chuckled. "It was lively with the four of them here. I'm impressed how strong they have all become. Grimbeard's heir in particular."

She saw five figures, and her eyes immediately settled on a boy in a green shirt, a brown leather waistcoat and auburn hair. Astrid knew who it was. Her legs ran faster than before, straight towards the Cove. She had to give the news to everyone else. Gothi, Gobber, and the chief in particular.

It only took a few seconds for the figures to adjust to their surroundings.

"So this is Berk," said Merida. "It's a lot more spacious than how I imagined it."

"Hiccup never said it was a kingdom," Rapunzel murmured.

"This looks exactly the same as it was three months ago," said Jack, his voice light. But as soon as he saw Hiccup's eyes, he knew that he was wrong. Jack followed Hiccup's gaze as they lead him to the Haddock Household, Hiccup's home. Atop it was a flag that did not bear the Berk crest.

"The Outcasts?" Jack whispered.

Hiccup furrowed his eyebrows. "They really did take over when we were away."

The shouts of approaching men caught him off guard. A group of Outcast warriors charged from just around the corner of the houses. Their battle cries ceased the moment they laid eyes on the group of teenagers and the dragon that accompanied them.

Merida smirked as she reached for one of her arrows. "Are these enemies?"

"Looks like it," Jack added. Rapunzel grabbed her whip and lashed it at the ground once for a feel. Toothless turned and growled, his teeth appearing from his gums.

The Outcasts started murmuring among themselves in surprise. "Look!" cried one. "It's the Hiccup boy and his dragon! The boy is back."

"Relax, just separate him from his dragon and we can easily take him on," whispered another.

Hiccup's anger and disbelief dissolved within seconds. Those emotions had morphed into determination. He didn't had a chance to fight for his home three months ago. But he did now.

Hiccup stepped forward. "Hey Outcasts!" he declared. His left hand swiftly moved to the hilt and Hiccup drew his blade. "Don't think I was the same as I was three months ago."

â€"â€"â€"â€"â€"â€"â€"â€"â€"â€"â€"â€"â€"â€"â€"â€"â€"â€"

I would like to thank both old and new readers! Just checking this story out means a lot to me. If you are interested in reading the previous installments of this fanfiction series, they are both posted on the website and are entitled "Defenders of Realms: The Gathering" and "Defenders of Realms: Preparations".

The next chapter will be entitled "Hideout".

Oh yay, I finished Chapter Two!

This story will be rather heavy on Hiccup, and possibly Jack, much like the other installments. I'm trying my best not to have the two of them overshadow Merida and Rapunzel.

****Chapter Two: Hideout****

The cove was now in sight. Without even waiting for another second, Astrid thrust her weapons into Fishlegs' arms. Fishlegs exclaimed in surprise as he stumbled around with the supplies. Some of them fell to the floor.

"Astrid, what are you doing?"

The girl grabbed a battle axe from the batch. "Didn't you see him?" she asked as she started running off back towards the village of Berk. The viking teens exchanged questioning faces for a moment.

"See who?" Tuffnut called out to her.

"Hiccup!" replied Astrid's voice as she disappeared into the trees.

" " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " "

With a plasma blast, several Outcast men were forced back. Toothless stood his ground in front of them, and let out a threatening snarl. He slammed his tail into a row of Outcasts. They attempted to slice him. Toothless deflected them with his metal prosthetic before firing once again.

One of them growled before getting up to his feet again. "What's going on? Who are these people?"

"We know the boy and the dragon," muttered one, "but we don't know any of the others."

"The boy seems different," another one commented.

Indeed he was. Hiccup had a resolute flame flickering in his eyes, nothing like the Outcast had ever seen. Not when they kidnapped him, not when they threatened him with his dragon, not when Alvin taunted him for being a runt. They were the eyes of an experienced warrior.

Hiccup's body moved swiftly between the Outcasts, his sword was raised all the while. An Outcast attempted to stab him. Hiccup neatly sidestepped and slammed the hilt of the sword on the back of the Outcast's neck. The viking fell to the ground. The Outcasts that stood in front of Hiccup stared at the line of their unconscious comrades that continued to pile up.

Hiccup sliced his blade in the air once. "It's not like they're dead. Unlike you guys, I don't have a knack for killing people."

The Outcasts didn't answer. Hiccup's instincts tensed. He hopped away as they fell face-first onto the ground. On their backs were nasty looking cuts. Standing at the feet of the Outcasts was someone Hiccup

recognized all too well.

"Astrid!" Hiccup sheathed his sword and ran forward to her. He felt the urge to wrap his arms around her and give her a hug so badly. But as soon as he got close, Astrid swung her arm and gave Hiccup a hard punch on the shoulder. Hiccup yelped as he rubbed the new bruise. He gave Astrid a confused look.

"That's for not coming back for three months," she said playfully. Before Hiccup could interject, Astrid pulled him into a tight embrace. "And that's for making it back alive."

"I see you haven't changed," Hiccup choked from his tightly squeezed lungs. Toothless nudged Astrid as she released her grip on Hiccup.

"Good to see you too, Toothless," said Astrid, patting the Night Fury's head.

"While the reunion is nice and all," Jack suddenly groaned as he sent a block of ice flying towards a group of Outcasts, "we really need to get out of here."

One of Merida's arrows dug itself into one of the Nightmares. "We'll be wasting your energy fighting these guys."

Rapunzel landed beside her teammates after lashing her whip out at the Outcasts. "I agree. We have to save it for Pitch and Alvin."

"Alright," Astrid replied. "Follow me." She waved her arm towards the direction of the woods. Merida and Rapunzel were the first to turn and leave. Hiccup took a quick peek at Jack's situation as more Outcasts gathered around him. Hiccup reached out his hand and grabbed Jack's hood, pulling him away just as an axe buried itself into the ground where Jack stood seconds before.

"Hey!" the winter spirit cried as Hiccup dragged him into the woods with his heels on the ground. "That is not how to treat your leader!"

"No time for that," said Hiccup urgently, "Jack, we need a wall."

Jack whisked his staff upward, and a wave of ice shot up from the ground reaching for the skies. The Outcasts exclaimed in surprise.

"Ow, ow, ow," Jack murmured, his feet slamming onto the logs scattered throughout the forest. "Hiccup, can I run on my own now?"

Hiccup released his hold on the winter spirit as he continued running. He turned his head to Astrid. "Where are we going?"

She grinned. "The last place of residence for us who still stand against Pitch and Alvin: the Cove."

Hiccup couldn't help but laugh. "You really know how to pick your hideout

location."

[illegible]

The Outcast Chief and Dark Spirit mused over the news from the Outcast Warriors. Alvin stroked his beard, deep in thought. "I see. So they're already back?" He chuckled slightly. "That little Hiccup didn't see my entire army yet. If he couldn't survive my men it won't be any fun since he won't get to see my dragons."

"I doubt they were at full strength," said Pitch. "The fight in Burgess happened less than a week ago. I wouldn't think they would recover so quickly."

"Maybe they didn't," said Alvin. He turned to his men. "Send out one final search party into the woods. Find out where they're hiding, and do not hesitate to attack with full force."

"The Hiccup boy and Jack Frost are to be left alive," Pitch continued. "The chief of Berk and the blacksmith are to be captured. Permission to kill everyone else granted."

[illegible]

They all sat in silence around the campfire as the blanket of night covered them. Around the fire sat Jack, Merida and Rapunzel and the viking teenagers, all of them with bowls filled with food in their hands. Over the course of dinner, they caught up on each's other adventures. Jack's face was serious as he listened to the story of how Berk was invaded.

"It was a few days after you and Hiccup left," said Astrid, her tone solemn. "We were expecting men, and we had confidence that we would be able to hold them off. We did have dragons after all. What we didn't expect was that the Outcasts had dragons themselves."

"I thought the reason Alvin was after Hiccup was because he had the dragon training ability he wanted so badly," said Rapunzel.

"Not anymore," Fishlegs answered. "It turns out Mildew, that son of a troll, tricked Hiccup into teaching him the basics to dragon training. He simply ratted us out and spilled the beans to Alvin."

"But there weren't any dragons when the Outcasts attacked us in the village," Merida pointed out.

"They did that to us too," Snotlout muttered. "They didn't send the dragons in until later. We weren't ready for it."

"Man, a lot of things blew up that day," said Tuffnut dreamily.

"It was beautiful," his sister added. "Except that it wasn't really that much of a good thing."

Jack sighed. "It looks like we've got our work cut out for us here. We have Pitch, Alvin and their subordinates, Nightmares and now

dragons to fight."

"I can't believe this place hasn't been found yet," Merida commented.

"We have a lot of spies," replied Astrid. "We keep luring them away, and finishing off Nightmares before they get close."

"But they've never attacked in large numbers so it was pretty easy to keep them away," said Fishlegs. "I find it rather suspicious."

There was a moment of silence. Astrid detected the conversation coming to stand still, and immediately threw in something else. "So, I noticed that Hiccup learned to sword-fight. Since when did he get that strong?"

"You should have seen his determination," said Rapunzel. "After Toothless got captured, all he could think of was training. It was a pain to keep him in bed until his wounds healed."

"He got that good in three months?" Snotlout wondered out loud. "I wonder if he could beat me."

"He probably can," said Tuffnut.

"My money's on Hiccup," Fishlegs added.

"Speaking of Hiccup," Merida began, "where is he?"

"He's in the chief's tent," replied Astrid, her tone soft. "We can't blame him. After what happened to his father, I don't think any one of us would be doing anything different." Her eyes drifted to an empty spot in their circle with an untouched bowl. "He doesn't seem to have an appetite either."

Jack got up to his feet and picked up the bowl. "I'll go check up him." The others watched Jack as he walked to one of the tents stationed in the cove. Jack peered his head in through the curtains.

The tent was darkly lit with only a few dinky looking candles, leaving most of the room in darkness. Hiccup sat on the floor with his legs crossed. Toothless was curled up and snoozing beside him. The gaze of Berk's young heir was fixated on the man sleeping on the bed in front of him. Hiccup simply stared. He didn't say anything.

Jack cleared his throat. "Aren't you hungry?"

Hiccup barely turned his head, catching Jack in the corner of his eye. "No," he answered, almost emotionless.

"Hiccup, you're going to have to eat something."

"Several broken ribs, scrapes and cuts all over, a stab in the thigh, several severe burns," said Hiccup, still refusing to face his friend. "That was what my father had to endure while protecting Berk." Hiccup's voice was quivering. His fists tensed. "On top of that, I wasn't there to defend my home with him." Tears now threatened to fall. "I can't believe I was so useless! I wasn't there

when my father needed me most. It's not just my father either. Astrid, Fishlegs, Gobber, the people of Berk. I simply left them at the mercy of Alvin."

A sigh escaped Jack's lips. "You're so caught up in what you couldn't do in the past. You should be thinking that you're here now, and focus on what you can do."

Hiccup turned around, and looked at his leader who had caring eyes. Hiccup forced out a dry laugh. "Since when did you get so wise?"

Jack shrugged. "If you were around for three hundred years, you'd start picking up words of wisdom too." He placed the bowl of food on the floor beside his feet. "Just in case you feel like eating." With that, Jack left the tent.

Chuckling slightly to himself, Hiccup's sights drifted back to his father. There was a soft groan as Stoick's eyelids slowly fluttered.

"Dad?" Hiccup whispered.

Stoick strained a smile towards his son. "Hiccup."

"Oh thank Thor. Dad, are you alright?"

"These injuries? I've had worse. The chief of Berk has it hard doesn't he?"

Hiccup couldn't help but smirk. "We're vikings, it's an occupational hazard."

It seemed that Stoick had been conscious for a while now, and had eavesdropped on the conversation between Jack and his son. He kept quiet of course, already knowing that just staying awake relieved Hiccup immensely. For the most part, neither of them said anything, simply enjoying the company of each other. Hiccup didn't know when his eyelids started feeling tired, and fell into a dreamless sleep.

" "

There was a loud roar.

Hiccup jolted upright, only to find Toothless on his feet and poised for action. Alarmed, Hiccup started to feel sleep leave him.

Stoick carefully shifted into a sitting position as he eyed his son questioningly. "What in the name of Odin is going on?"

"I have no idea," said hiccup.

There were shouts and yells coming from outside of the tent. He was confused and was about to head out when Astrid suddenly appeared in the tent.

"Hiccup!" Her eyes were wide with fear. It was then that Hiccup realizedâ€ they were being attacked.

Zippleback, carefully commanding them what to do with the Outcasts running towards them.

Hiccup stood there, watching the whole scene unfold in front of his eyes. "I wasn't there when Alvin attacked earlier. I'm going to stay here and fight this time!"

"Hiccup, we're too tired," Jack tried reasoning with his friend, knowing well that Hiccup was as stubborn as a mule. "We've battled a whole army of Nightmares only a few days ago, and then we had yesterday's battle."

"You also barely had any rest or good food yesterday," Rapunzel spoke up, her caring eyes looking at Hiccup. "I don't think you're up for a fight. We have to leave."

"I can't just abandon my village!" Hiccup retorted as an explosion shook the skies.

"You have to!" shouted Gobber, who was limping as he approached the teenagers. "You kids have the dragons, and are probably the only ones who can fight off Pitch and Alvin's armies."

For a moment, Hiccup was hesitant to ask. "What about you?"

"We'll be fine," said Astrid.

"No, Astrid," Gobber suddenly cut in, "you're going with them."

"What?" Astrid looked at Gobber suspiciously. "I'm a proud warrior of Berk! It would bring shame I left."

"My point exactly," Hiccup muttered.

Gobber growled frustratedly just as Merida came up to them. "Gobber's right," she said. "I went ahead for a while, and their sending some weird invisible dragons, and another that buries under the ground."

"Changewings and Whispering Deaths," Fishlegs, Meatlug landing next to Hiccup. "Hiccup, with the weapons we have there is no way to fight them off."

Hiccup let out a annoyed sigh. "Alright, we'll retreat." The young heir got up to his feet. "Fishlegs, Astrid, get Snotlout and the twins. We've getting out of here."

Nodding, Astrid and Fishlegs shot for the skies without saying anything. Hiccup turned to Gobber. "Can we get my father to come with us?"

The blacksmith shook his head solemnly. "According to Gothi, we can't take Stoick anywhere. We'll protect him, don't you worry, Hiccup."

Even so, Hiccup allowed himself to curse in Norse. A group of Outcasts and Nightmares started to gather around Stoick's tent. Hiccup turned to his teammates. "You guys, cover me."

"Got it," Jack replied.

"Take your time," said Merida as Hiccup pushed the curtains aside. His father turned to look at him with mournful eyes. The sounds of the raid outside could still be heard clearly.

"You're leaving, aren't you?" said Stoick, softly.

Hiccup forced himself to nod. "Will you be alright?"

The chief of Berk gave his son a sincere smile. "It will take more than that to bring me down." There was a pause. "Take care, Hiccup."

"I'll be back for you, dad."

Mustering up his willpower, Hiccup stepped out of the tent. His friends were right outside, both the Defenders and the dragon riders. They stood their ground against their enemies, surrounding the chief's tent at all angles.

There was an angry shout from behind. In the corner of his vision, Hiccup caught an Outcast sneaking up on him. He leaped out the way, but a book from his waistcoat fell onto the floor. Hiccup looked up at the familiar looking Outcast. "Savage."

"That's Grimbeard's Memoirs isn't it?" the Outcast mused. "I'll be taking that to Alvin."

Hiccup drew his sword. "Forget it."

Savage made the first lunge towards the book. Hiccup launched himself forward. Savage brought up his own weapon, a large club that managed to block Hiccup's strike. Savage looked at Hiccup with an amused expression. "What was that? I hear that you've gotten stronger, but there was hardly any energy in that attack. Are you that exhausted?"

Hiccup took a step back. He pointed his sword forward. "Why don't we see am I really out of juice."

"No thanks."

Savage held Grimbeard's Memoirs in his hand. Hiccup's eyes widened. "When did you-"

"Masters of burglary." Just as Savage turned to leave, an arrow missed Savage's face by a hair. Merida stood behind Hiccup, her bow raised from the previous attack. Without wasting any time, Hiccup shot forward, his fingers reaching the tip of the book.

"Alvin. Is. Not. Getting. This. Book!" With a pull, Hiccup attempted to yank the book away from Savage, but only managed to tear off several pages. His own force made him tumble backwards. By the time he got back up to his feet, Savage was gone.

"Hiccup!" Rapunzel yelled over the noises of battle. "The next wave of Nightmares and dragons are coming!"

Nodding, Hiccup threw his legs over Toothless' back. "We have to get

going."

Merida hopped on Stormfly and Rapunzel climbed on with Hiccup. Toothless pounced into the air, an arrow narrowly missing them. Merida pulled out an arrow from her quiver and fired it at one of the Outcasts below. The other dragons followed Hiccup and Toothless as they headed for the top of the forest.

There was a moment in which they were surrounded by just the sky. Rapunzel watched with great wonder. "Wow," she breathed.

"Yep, it's quite the view," Snotlout murmured.

Hiccup whipped his head left and right. There were more Nightmares coming. Furrowing his eyebrows, he directed Toothless into the forest below and stopped just out of sight from the cove. The other dragons, and Jack, landed next to him.

"What are we doing?" the winter spirit asked. "If we stay here, they're going to find us."

"We can't go by the sky," Hiccup answered sternly. "The Nightmares and Outcasts will see us. We have to go by foot." Taking a couple of strides forward, Hiccup found himself overlooking the cove. The fights continued to rage on. From where he stood, Hiccup could see how crazy the cove had become. Once a safe haven, now a merciless battlefield. He saw people lying on the ground, mixed along with black sand of fallen Nightmares.

Then, there was a loud blast. A roar rippled through the air as the chief's tent caught on fire. Smoke started to rise as the tattered leather skin of the tent started turning bright orange. Utter fear and panic filled Hiccup's body. His legs turned stone cold. His left hand started to move towards the hilt of his sword without him even realizing it.

"I have to-" Hiccup whispered, almost as if he wasn't even there. "I have to get down there!" His fingers suddenly wrapped themselves around the hilt. He shot forward.

Hiccup's body came to an abrupt stop, just as he was about to draw his sword. Astrid and Jack had their heels dug into the dirt, and their arms pulling against Hiccup's.

"Astrid! Jack!" Hiccup cried as he struggled against their grip. "Let me go!"

"You're going to get yourself killed if you go down there!" Astrid retorted.

"But my father-!"

Hiccup's voice trailed off as Jack started dragging him backwards. Little by little, Hiccup's view of the cove started to disappear. Toothless stared as his rider was shouting out desperately, trying to escape his friends.

"I can't just leave him!"

"How stubborn are you?" Astrid groaned.

By now, Hiccup was fighting back sobs. He still fought against the strength of his friends. There was sharp blow to the back of his head, and Hiccup's body went numb. Astrid and Jack caught him just as he fell.

"He needed that," said Merida. Astrid pulled Hiccup's arm over her shoulder as the group started walking into the woods. The dragons trailed slightly behind, Toothless staying right beside Hiccup and Astrid. Jack was at the very end, alert for anyone that might follow them. Merida and Rapunzel were up front, and everyone else in the middle.

"Where do we have to go?" Ruffnut asked.

"It's going to be awfully quiet without Hiccup," said Snotlout.

â€"â€"â€"â€"â€"â€"â€"â€"â€"â€"â€"â€"â€"â€"â€"â€"â€"â€"â€"

4. A New Quest

Chapter Four: A New Quest

"Hey!" Tuffnut yelled. "Don't go wasting good food, Hiccup."

"Well look at that, you're sulking again," Jack sneered

playfully.

"I'm not sulking."

"Okay, okay," the winter spirit said, an airy tone still in his voice. "I'm just trying to lighten up the mood. You're making everything depressing, you know that, Hiccup?" There was a moment of silence. Toothless purred softly from behind Hiccup, but the young boy didn't even respond.

Hiccup let out an exhausted sigh. "I can't help protect my fellow villagers. I can't save my dad." Reaching into his waistcoat pocket, Hiccup brought out the ripped pages of what remained of Grimbeard's Memoirs. "I can't even keep a book safe."

"You're being too hard on yourself," said Rapunzel. "Any one of us could have been in that situation. We couldn't have done anything either."

"There are times when you really do need to fall back," Merida added. "Sometimes, if you still push forward, you'll have to sacrifice something. My father knows that from his battle with Mor'du."

"I'd rather lose my whole leg than lose my dad," Hiccup whispered. A part of him almost said that he would rather die, but something inside him urged him not to do so. Not for the sake of himself. Instead, for the sake of his friends who all worked so hard to help him get to where he was. Accepting death would be the same as giving up. All of their efforts would end in vain. He couldn't sacrifice his life.

"Anyway, there was no way you could've fought against all those armies without enough rest," said Astrid, attempting to be reassuring. She placed a hand on Hiccup's shoulder. "Just get some rest and we'll be able to launch a counterattack soon."

"So what if we do?" Hiccup questioned. "If that was just a search party, there's no way we can take them on. We're what, a bunch of teenagers and a couple of dragons?"

"We're strong, though," Snotlout interjected before taking a bite out of a roasted drumstick. "All those Nightmares and Outcasts shouldn't be a problem."

"Yeah," Ruffnut breathed. "That also means we get to blow things up. It will be fun."

"That's besides the point," said Hiccup. "No matter how strong we are, our goal still hasn't changed."

"And what goal would that be?" Fishlegs asked.

"Hiccup having to fight Alvin for the position of King of the Wilderwest," Jack answered. He directed his gaze towards Hiccup. "I see. You're worried that you can't take him on. Will it make you feel better if I say that I have doubts that I'll beat Pitch?"

"But you've never doubted your abilities," Hiccup muttered. "You still fought against Pitch even though you had a massive difference in strength."

"So?" Astrid said, suspicion and annoyance in her voice. "You stood up to a dragon the size of a mountain, bloodthirsty vikings and dangerous dragons. Weren't you overpowered by them too?"

"Even then I still get captured." Hiccup forced out a laugh. "It's almost funny. I had so much confidence when I was much weaker. Now, I'm just a little bit stronger and I don't have that belief in myself anymore." Hiccup paused as he listened to the words coming out from his mouth. Battling Pitch took a toll on him, but it wasn't just Pitch. Taunted for being weak, captured and taken prisoner several times, having to rely on others to constantly save him.

"Forget it," he murmured. "I might as well hand the throne over to Alvin. I'm not strong enough to become King of the Wilderwest." Without so much as thinking, Hiccup threw the pages of Grimbeard's Memoirs into the blazing camp fire.

Rapunzel nearly shrieked. "Hiccup! What are you doing?"

"Getting rid of it," said Hiccup nonchalantly. "So at least Alvin can't get his hands on them."

"But they were preserved for you for the past hundred years," said Merida. "You can't just throw them away."

"I already did."

"Guys, stop arguing!" Jack hissed at his teammates. Everyone whipped their heads towards him. "You might want to look at those pages."

Confused, Hiccup followed Jack's words. Within the burning wood, the pages of Grimbeard's Memoirs had bright words etched onto them as it curled and started to ignite. On it, letters in ancient Rune. Hiccup hurried to the fire. From where he stood, he quickly read the message. It filled the entire page, and Hiccup skimmed throughout as fast as he could before it faded away. Each word stuck to his mind like glue.

Hiccup couldn't imagine what he was deciphering. His eyes widened in surprise just as he finished the last sentence, and the words disappear along with the paper. The fire flickered, as if nothing had ever happened. But the final pages of Grimbeard's memoirs were gone.

"Was it that much of a surprise?" asked Merida, breaking the silence.

"What did it say?" wondered Fishlegs, suddenly joining the conversation. Taking a deep breath in, Hiccup repeated what he saw word by word.

For _a hero cannot triumph all the time. Sometimes he will be defeated, and how he faces that defeat is a test of his character.

_

_I am sure you must have been forced to flee at least once. But do not lose heart. _

_There is still one item missing if you wish to become King. _

_The Lost Crown of the Wilderwest. _

I leave it to you, my true heir, at the place where heroes rest.

~Grimbeard the Ghastly

"A hidden message from Grimbeard himself," Astrid breathed. "'The Lost Crown of the Wilderwest'. That must be the crown Grimbeard and the previous Kings wore as they ruled."

"A fine accessory," Fishlegs added.

"Then that means we have to find it," said Merida.

"There's one problem," said Rapunzel. "Where is this 'place where heroes rest'?"

Fishlegs thought for a moment, placing a hand on his chin.

"Technically, it would be Vahalla, the hall of heroes and where they go then they die. But that's in Asgard. There's no way we could reach it."

"No," Hiccup spoke up. "It's an island in the Barbaric Archipelago. That much I'm sure of."

"What makes you say that?" Jack asked.

Hiccup couldn't help but grin. "I solved the riddles of Hamish the Second, Grimbeard's son, Chucklehead. I think I can crack this little code set up by his father. First off, it had to be somewhere we could reach, so it had to be somewhere in this archipelago. Next, Grimbeard used the term 'hero'. That's what the people of Berk and everyone else saw him. And finally, 'rest'. An eternal rest."

"Rest in peace," Astrid added on.

Hiccup nodded. "Precisely. The final resting place of heroes. The isle of 'Hero's End'. That's where the crown is hidden."

Snotlout crossed his arms. "I could have figured that out."

Everyone chuckled slightly. Stretching his arms, Jack stood up. "Alright, we have our destination. We've been on the run for a few days so I think we're finally getting our energy back. Should we leave tomorrow morning?"

"Sounds good," said Merida.

"Sure," Rapunzel agreed.

"I'm coming too," said Astrid. "I keep missing on Hiccup's adventures. Count me in on this one."

"Fine," Jack grumbled. "But no cuddling during the quest."

Hiccup's cheeks turned bright red. "We're not together!" he protested. "Anyway, Grimbeard said that this is a test of my

Jack pulled up beside Toothless. The winter spirit had been flying alongside them since the beginning of the trip, doing occasionally fancy tricks along the way. "Hiccup, I'm tired. Can I ride on Toothless?"

"Carry your own weight, Jack," Hiccup grumbled. Jack hung his head for a moment as he trailed behind the dragons. The gang had left as soon as dawn broke, careful to rest up enough and leave before the Outcasts could spot them. They had been flying for several non-stop hours. Merida became more and more restless as she started asking when they would get there. For the young viking that sat in front of her, it had been an increasingly annoying flight.

"Are we even going in the right direction?" Merida murmured.

"We should be," said Astrid. "But if you really want to know, Hiccup is the one with the map."

"Was," Hiccup grumbled, "since Mr. Frost here knocked the map into the ocean."

"Oh that's just perfect," said Jack. "And you're even blaming it on me."

Hiccup stopped talking after that and simply focused on the horizon, hoping that even a tiny speck of land would come into sight. After straining his eyes for nearly half an hour, Hiccup spotted a mound of dirt in the distance.

"That must be it!" exclaimed Rapunzel in a lively manner, almost plummeting Astrid off Stormfly's saddle.

"I knew we were going in the right direction," Hiccup grinned as he directing an excited Toothless towards the island. The two dragons touched down, quickly followed by Jack. The winter spirit dropped onto his knees. "I haven't flown like that in months. I think I lost my touch."

Hopping off Toothless, Hiccup took a good look around the chunk of land in the middle of the ocean known as Hero's End. It was mostly black sand, with a few trees. Sitting on the far edge of the island was a tiny little cottage.

"Who would be living all the way out here?" Astrid wondered.

Hiccup shrugged as he started to walk over to the house. "Well, we're about to find out."

The others ran after him by the time Hiccup reached the door. He had no idea why was he bothering to explore the cottage. His instincts said he should. His brain however, was telling him to run. Before Hiccup could sort out his thoughts, he knocked on the door.

There was a moment of silence.

"Maybe nobody's home," said Rapunzel.

The door slowly creaked open ever so slightly. Rays from the sun eagerly made it's way into the house, as if it hadn't seen the light

of day for decades. A damp, rotten smell came out from the house. From the crack, a single eye appeared from the shadows. Rapunzel and Jack jumped back, Merida and Astrid almost reaching for their weapons.

The dark pupil wandered between each of the teens, examining each of them thoroughly. Hiccup swallowed the lump in his throat as the stranger's gaze landed on Toothless. The door violently threw open, revealing an elderly woman dressed in ragged grey robes.

Merida leaned in towards Jack. "She is disgusting. End of discussion."

"Welcome, children!" the woman sang. "I don't get many visitors on this little island. They say it brings despair so most vikings stay away. I'm Excellinor. I see you have dragons with you. I find that very interesting."

"Is that so?" Hiccup said, rather nervously. "Well, they are well trained so they probably won't attack you."

"Probably?" Excellinor repeated.

"Won't," Hiccup quickly corrected himself. There was something about Excellinor that Hiccup's instincts hated right away. She felt like the mother of all that is evil in the world. Just looking at her hands, the sight of her suspiciously long nails frightened Hiccup. They were draped in purple, looking much like poison.

"You think she knows where the crown is?" Astrid whispered to Rapunzel.

Excellinor's eyes suddenly lit up with excitement. "You kids here for the crown are you?" She moved to one side of her door. "Please, come in, come in. The dragons will have to wait outside though."

Toothless purred softly. Hiccup patted his dragon. "We'll be alright, Toothless. Just wait our here."

Hiccup took one deep breath of fresh air before stepping into the stuffy cottage. His friends followed suit. Jack took one sniff of the room. "It smells like old hag in here."

Excellinor slammed the door shut.

Jack flinched. "You think she heard that?"

Excellinor turned to face the teenagers, her eyes landed on Hiccup's sheath. "That's a find sword you have there," she hissed. For a moment, Hiccup could have sworn the woman's wrinkled hands were tempted to swipe the blade from him. Unconsciously, Hiccup tightened the scabbard's hold on his belt.

"You're looking for Grimbeard's crown, I suppose?" asked Excellinor. The teenagers exchanged unsure glances.

"How did you know?" said Rapunzel.

"Every single viking who comes to these waters have come looking for

the crown," said Excellinor. She walked over to a trapdoor sitting in the corner of the room. As she propped the door open, cold air poured into the cottage. "It's down there. Grimbeard built a series of tunnels and hid the crown in the center. Though most of those who enter never come back out, and those who do had always returned empty handed. What makes you any different?"

"Uh&| " Hiccup wanted to answer, but he couldn't really find the words.

Excellinor suddenly chuckled. "I was just teasing you, honey." She gestured towards the trapdoor, and the eerie atmosphere below. "In you go if you want to find that crown."

"I'll go first," Jack insisted. Holding the staff in one hand, Jack squeezed himself into the trapdoor. His fingers wrapped themselves around age old wooden bars that slowly descended into the darkness. He took a few steps downwards.

"Looks like it's good to go, guys," he called. "But you might want to watch out for termites."

Rapunzel went down after Jack, followed by Merida. Astrid shrugged as she made her way down the first couple of ladders. "I don't to even imagine how would Gobber or Stoick had to come through this place."

Trying not to envision what Astrid had just described, Hiccup carefully lowered himself into the trapdoor. He felt his feet land on a few rungs below. They held. Hiccup looked at Excellinor. "Are you sure the crown is down there?"

"Positive," she answered. "Be sure you come back out, Hiccup Horrendous Haddock the Third."

Hiccup sent the old woman a cautious gaze. "I will," he said, a skeptical tone in his voice. He then took the steps down towards into the caverns below. Hiccup had been climbing down for a considerable amount of time before he could see a ray of light coming from below. His friends each held torches in their hands. Hiccup jumped down the last couple of steps.

"I see you took your time," said Astrid.

"Do you know old, wrinkled and creepy or something?" asked Jack.

For a moment, Hiccup thought about his answer. "I don't know her. But I think she knows me."

"We should start making our way through these caverns," Merida suggested. She held out her torch to the path ahead of them. "It seems that they might go on forever."

Hiccup nodded. "Let's get going."

€" €"

"Go, go, go!" Jack barked.

The teenagers stumbled through the caves, running as fast as they can. Hiccup pushed against Merida's back. "Faster, faster!"

"Why don't you try leading the way, then!" the princess snapped in return.

"Less talking more running," Rapunzel urged. Astrid made the mistake of looking behind her shoulder. Just behind Jack was a dragon with sets of rotating sharp teeth. The dragon roared at them before proceeding to shoot forward.

"Who led us straight into the lair of a Whispering Death?!" Hiccup demanded in a aspirated voice.

"Jack was leading the way!" Astrid replied.

"Stop blaming me for everything!" Jack groaned. Fighting the temptation to scream, the group of teenagers sped through the caverns. Merida held the torch far in front of her as they tried to get away from the screeching noises of the Whispering Death.

"It's still following us!" Rapunzel cried.

"I think it's getting closer," Astrid added.

"Hey, let's just consider ourselves lucky we didn't run into it in the other five hours we've been stuck down here," Hiccup muttered.

Merida found a fork in the path approaching. There was a small scratch created by Hiccup's sword at one of them, and an icicle mark from Jack that told them which was the direction they came from. They have been using this system the entire time they had been wandering around in the labyrinth. It was an idea expected from both Hiccup and Jack.

The team had marked every path they took, and every part they came from. In front of Merida, there was only one other path that they didn't take.

"This way!"

Merida made a sharp turn. Rapunzel easily followed, but Astrid and Hiccup barely managed to stop themselves from crashing into the walls. Jack managed to force them through. He shot a beam of ice at the Whispering Death. The dragon avoided the blast.

"Don't shoot at it," Hiccup ordered. "I don't want to hurt any dragons!"

"But I don't want to end up becoming minced Guardian," Jack replied. "So if you want me to not shoot at that set of killer teeth, then run faster."

"This is as fast as it goes!"

Hiccup's eyes spotted a source of light. It wasn't Merida's torch. It was much brighter. An orange glow came from up ahead. He willed his legs to go faster. The path opened up. In front of Hiccup was a

massive pit dug into the ground. A column of stone was raised right in the center. And in between all of thatâ€¦

"Fireworm dragons," Astrid murmured as she peered over the edge.

"Whispering Deaths _and_ Fireworms," Hiccup groaned. "Why not a Smothering Smokebreath or a Changewing while we're at it?"

Jack, Merida and Rapunzel stood around the edge of the pit. The sound of grinding dirt closed in on them. The Whispering Death shot out from the cave. It loomed over the teenagers, roaring viciously.

Merida reached for an arrow. "We're going to have to attack it."

"Wait!" called Hiccup.

"Please don't tell me you're still trying to train that thing!" Astrid demanded as she brought out her axe.

"Just keep that thing busy for a few seconds," Hiccup pleaded. He darted away from his friends, leaving them looking at the Whispering Death.

"You heard him," said Jack. "Try not to hurt the thing."

One of Merida's shots buried itself into the scaly skin of the dragon. "Too late."

The Whispering Death let out a loud cry. Jack froze the water in the air around him. A block of ice materialized in the dragon's mouth. With a massive crunch, the block crumbled into dust. Jack had an annoyed expression on his face.

"It could tear apart rock," Astrid reminded him. "What did you expect?"

From behind, Hiccup took a single step closer to the tail of the Whispering Death. He tried to calm his own thoughts. _The Whispering Death has spikes in it's tail just like the Deadly Nadder. Maybe it can be trained the same way. Okay, Hiccup. Deep breath in. Approach it carefully and slowly from behind so you don't freak it out.

—

Rapunzel held one end of her whip while Astrid had the other. The whip was spread across two stalagmites. Pulling it back, Merida took a sharp shard of ice from Jack and placed it on the whip. She aligned her vision with the makeshift slingshot.

"Don't hit Hiccup," said Jack.

"I don't need you to tell me that," Merida answered. Releasing her grip, the ice arrow shot forward. The Whispering Death barely managed to dodge it, and a large part of itself was grazed. It bellowed in pain.

The dragon's flailing tail lashed around randomly. Before Hiccup could even react, he was slammed hard in the stomach. His stance

faltered, and his body went flyingâ€ straight towards the depths of the pit.

" " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " "

I hope this chapter was at least more entertaining than the last one. The next chapter will be entitled "The Lost Crown of the Wilderwest".

6. The Lost Crown of the Wilderwest

(insert fast speaking announcing voice): The following chapter contains bits that has been pastiched from an anime. Alright, let's get this show on the road.

****Chapter Six: The Lost Crown of the Wilderwest****

Astrid's body was still as stone as she watched in horror.
"Hiccup!"

It took a second for Hiccup to react. He drew his sword, turned his body, and stabbed the blade right into the stone column. Hiccup closed his eyes, feeling himself slide to a stop. When he slightly opened them, he was only a couple of meters above the fireworms. He heaved a sigh of relief. Looking up, he could barely his friends gathered around the edge.

"Oh hey, he's still alive," said Jack.

"Merida! Jack! Where you guys trying to kill me?" Hiccup yelled. Looming above the heads of his friends, the Whispering Death drew closer. Hiccup's eyes widened. "Behind you!"

Rapunzel pulled on her whip and a stalagmite, lodged with several arrows, dropped from the ceiling. It fell right onto the head of the Whispering Death. The dragon shrieked before it collapsed onto the ground.

"Already taken cared of," said Astrid.

"Guys, it's still moving," Merida suddenly pointed out. By now, Hiccup was hanging by one arm, his prosthetic foot barely managed catch a small part of the stone poking out. He watched as his friends moved back towards the Whispering Death.

The dragon got up. It screeched loudly, pushing the rocks off itself.

"Oh boy," Jack groaned. He felt his sweatshirt being pulled by Astrid, hauling him just out of harm's way. Jack quickly lifted up his staff. "Second time I was saved by forced drag. I'm already getting sick of it!"

The Whispering Death changed it's direction, propelling itself in Jack's direction. The winter spirit moved away, standing right at the edge of the ditch. Jack could see Hiccup in the corner of his eye. He didn't have to worry about falling, but he would have limited control over the wind in such a cave.

The spinning jaws of the Whispering Death drew closer. Jack with a strong arm, gestured his staff upward. A wall of ice shot up from the ground in front of his feet from practically nothing. With a loud rumble, the Whispering Death slammed itself into Jack's shield. Jack leapt backwards, created small platform of ice just below the rim and landed on two feet.

Jack lowered his head just as the wall of ice cracked, and the Whispering Death plummeted into the pit below. The beast roared, as it shot out spikes. Hiccup pushed himself against the column, narrowly avoiding the sharp projectiles.

"Well that takes care of that," said Merida.

"No, it doesn't!" Astrid snapped. She turned to Jack who had just hopped up. "You just startled the fireworms with that Whispering Death."

"So?" Jack blurted out nonchalantly.

Hiccup could already feel heat coming from below him. The fireworms started to glow bright orange. They started squirming, a few of them already making their way up the column. Hiccup's heartbeat started picking up.

"Guys!" he shouted. "Throw me a torch!"

Before anyone could say anything, Rapunzel grabbed a torch, lit it, and hurled it over the edge. The torch spiraled as it fell. Hiccup watched as the torch came down on the fireworms below. A small wall of fire erupted, it's flames threatening Hiccup's feet. "Merida, give me some of your-!"

Just as Hiccup finished his sentence, an arrow whizzed past his ear and lodged itself into the stone beside of him. "That was fast." Hiccup pulled the arrow out with his free hand, and jammed it back in at a spot in the column over his head. With his sword, he took it out and jabbed it again at another point higher than the arrow. His prosthetic foot pushed his weight onto the small uneven bits of the column.

Slowly, Hiccup began to climb up the stone column. After several minutes, Hiccup reached the top. He hauled himself over with exhausted arms.

"Okay, great!" Jack called out from the other side. "Now we have to get you back here."

Hiccup's eyes wandered to the center of the pillar. "Hold on a minute." Taking a couple of steps closer, Hiccup noticed something sitting on the ground. From the flickering light from the fireworms below, Hiccup made out a gold reflection.

At his feet was a brown and wrinkled dragon. It's wings were frail and it's body curled up. Hiccup noticed where the tiny dragon was sleeping. It was surrounded by a ring of pure gold. "The crown!"

The dragon's eyelids propped open and he sat up. The dragon carefully stood up. It moved slowly as it turned to face Hiccup.

"I am Wodensfang," said the dragon.

Hiccup nearly flinched in surprise. "You can speak?"

"I'm from a nearly extinct species, the only one among dragons that can communicate with humans. I am an old companion of Grimbeard the Ghastly."

Hiccup chuckled nervously. "That makes things much easier. See, we kind of need that crown."

"Many had journeyed to this place searching for the crown. I have not deemed any of them worthy. What makes you think you have what it takes to become King of the Wilderwest?"

"I'm not trying to becoming King of the Wilder-"

"Kneel, human."

"What?"

"Kneel."

Not wanting to oppose Wodensfang, Hiccup lowered himself onto one knee, bringing him much closer to the small creature. The boy and dragon looked at each other face to face. Hiccup gazed in return as the Wodensfang's hypnotic and wise eyes bored into his own.

Everything around Hiccup seemed to have faded away. He was no longer atop the stone column, but standing in a large green field. A wave of the breeze washed over his body as the grass rustled.

"Where am I?" Hiccup wondered out loud.

A person suddenly appeared in front of him, dragging himself along the grass. Hiccup couldn't help but feel better that he wasn't all alone in this place. The person seemed like your average burly viking. Hiccup was about to reach out and give him a handshake. But as he reached out-he froze.

The man's pupils rolled towards his skull. He fell forward and collapsed on the ground without so much as a word. Hiccup's eyes laid on the fallen man's back. A sword buried itself into armor. Hiccup gasped and jumped back in surprise. The man was unmoving. Hiccup didn't had to take another step to realize that he was dead.

His thoughts became a jumbled mess.

"Wha-what _is_ this?"

There was a flash behind him. Turning around, Hiccup saw a blazing fire. Walls and walls of flames rose up as far as the eye could see. Ashes rose up into the sky. Across the field were hundreds of people, all on the ground as fires began to lick against their flesh. It was then that Hiccup realized that they weren't just people. They were corpses.

The stench of death started to squeeze into his lungs, filling him

with utter despair. Fear had begun to take root deep in Hiccup's chest. He fell to his knees, his hands gripping his hair as his head started to pulse with pain. "Stop it!" Hiccup choked out, barely managing to get his words through. His vocal chords were almost frozen from horror. "Stop it!"

His cries echoed throughout the entire cavern, successfully reaching the ears of his friends. Jack swiped his staff in the air once. "What's that dragon doing to Hiccup?"

Astrid reached for her battle axe. "We have to go over there and help him."

"Stay where you are!" Wodensfang ordered. "If you wish to obtain the crown, then it is essential for the candidate for the throne to go through this trial. In the event that he fails to overcome it, and provide these visions with a proper answer, he will not have what it takes to become King of the Wilderwest."

Jack's eyes were skeptical. "And how many people have passed?"

"None."

The teenagers did not know what to say. They had no words. All they could do was put their faith in Hiccup. Jack, Astrid, Rapunzel and Merida reluctantly brought down their weapons. The only thing to do now was wait.

Tears threatened to fall from Hiccup's eyes as he watched village fall after village. Entire herds of dragons captured and slaughtered. He thought of Dagur, and how he and the Berserkerks still signed treaties with dragon blood. An execution was beginning to take place in front of him. Just as the axe was brought down, Hiccup squeezed his eyes shut. But he couldn't stop the vision. Images were just flowing into his head now.

"Why?" he whispered. "Why do I have to see these things?"

Just as the illusions of human and dragon demise started to disappear, a group of viking men stood around Hiccup, encircling him. They all hid their expressions, their faces masked by darkness. Hiccup's surroundings morphed into one where there is nothing but blackness, like an empty, pale background.

The one standing right in front of Hiccup stood first. "We are the souls of the previous Kings of the Wilderwest."

"What you see before you are the acts of the Kings," said one.

"They are the heart and soul of what it means to be King of the Wilderwest," one added. "Absolute control. Absolute strength. Absolute authority. An unquenchable thirst for more power. To expand territory and allow the Barbaric Archipelago to flourish, the proper sacrifice of inhabitants from the Mainland must be paid."

A sudden scream resonated in Hiccup's mind. He didn't even bother to fight the small droplets that rolled down his cheeks anymore. His body shook with horror. "This is what makes the King of the Wilderwest so great?"

"Do you have the will to continue on this great legacy?" another spirit demanded.

"Great legacy?" repeated a shaking Hiccup. "You call killing innocent lives a 'great legacy'?" Anger started to boil in his words. He had seen entire cities fall, people murdered, dragons annihilated. The cries of fathers forced to fight in wars. The screams of mothers crying for her lost children. The roaring of dragons who had been separated from their companions.

"If you wish to become King of the Wilderwest, you must have the determination to willingly sacrifice anything and everything," explained a King from behind Hiccup.

"I don't wish to become King of the Wilderwest!" he retorted. "I'm trying to prevent these very disasters from happening! I don't want to see anyone suffer. I don't want to see anyone die. There's no way I will be able to commit any of these cruel actions!"

"Do you or do you not have the resolve to carry on this history?" all of the Kings barked, save for one, barked simultaneously.

"I don't!" Hiccup cried. "If this is traditionâ€¦ if this is the history that you want me to carry onâ€¦" Hiccup raised his head and with the flame of conviction alight in his eyes, faced the spirits of the previous Kings. "â€¦ I'll make sure there will never be another King of the Wilderwest!"

There was a moment of stillness. No more visions appeared in Hiccup's mind, simply allowing him to still exist in a realm in which nothing but blackness exists. While most of the Kings said nothing, one of them stepped forward. Gazing upwards, Hiccup found himself looking at the same emerald eyes he had expected to see from himself when looking in a mirror. It was then that he realized who stood in front of him. The only King who had remained silent.

"Grimbeard the Ghastly!"

Grimbeard nodded solemnly. "So you've come, Hiccup Horrendous Haddock the Third." Grimbeard placed a hand on Hiccup's shoulders. "You look just like my son. I see that his will, and mine, lives in you."

Hiccup was confused to what the King was saying for a moment. But when Grimbeard stood up, his very words held more authority than any of the other spirits.

"Hiccup Horrendous Haddock the Third, I deem you worthy of becoming King of the Wilderwest!" Grimbeard's image slowly faded away, along with the illusions of all the other Kings. A path of light appeared in front of Hiccup. He reached out his hand. And just as the tip of his finger reached the light's source, everything went back to the way it was.

Once again, Hiccup was sitting on the stone column at the center of a pit in an open cave. He was still breathing heavily, and his heartbeat banged in his ears. Wodensfang stood in front of him. "You may rise."

His mind still slightly stunned, Hiccup raised himself up. From the other end of the cavern, Jack and the others cheered.

"He did it!" Rapunzel whooped.

"I never had a doubt," Merida muttered.

Astrid laughed. "Honestly, Hiccup's way too stubborn to give into a trial like that."

"Let's just be happy he cleared it," said Jack.

Hiccup looked down at Wodensfang. The old dragon wrapped the end of it's tail around the golden crown and pulled it towards himself. He picked up the crown, and held it up towards Hiccup. "It is yours."

Smiling inwardly, Hiccup took the crown from Wodensfang's claws. "All I have to do now is to make sure this doesn't fall into Alvin's hands." Hiccup let out an exhausted, yet still playful sigh. "That's easier said than done."

" " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " "

And that's chapter six! The next chapter shall be entitled "Ultimatum".

7. Ultimatum

Sorry it took so long to update! Darn it, school doesn't give writers(and readers) a break, do they...

Also, yes, Zehava, the last chapter was pastiched from Katekyo Hitman Reborn. Admittedly, I was surprised that someone actually recognized it! I just thought that succession scene would fit well, so I gave it shot.

The pacing for this is going to be little slow, so bear with me!

****Chapter Seven: Ultimatum****

Hiccup gave his friends a "what gives?" gesture as he stood at the edge of the stone pillar as Grimbeard's crown looped around his left arm. "Are you guys going to get me off this thing or not?"

"I don't know, can we leave him there to rot?" Jack smirked. An annoyed Astrid dug her elbow into his shoulder. With a wave of his staff, a straight path of ice materialized between the column and the rim. Jack shrugged. "If you want to cross, I suggest you do it before it melts."

Hiccup didn't need to hear that. He was already on his way across the icy bridge. He peered over the edge. Below him was the Whispering Death. It seemed to be unconscious and the fireworm dragons crawled all over it's skin. Hiccup couldn't help but feel sad for the creature. He hurried over to his friends, just as the path started to give way.

As he landed on solid ground, he was greeted by a plummet on the arm from Astrid. "You were screaming back there! Do you have any idea how worried we were?" She was praying to herself that Hiccup wouldn't notice the blush on her face.

"Was I screaming that loud?" Hiccup muttered, scratching the back of his head. "My bad."

"What happened back there?" asked Rapunzel.

"Creepy historical visions," Hiccup replied.

"Fascinating," Jack added.

"That's great and everything," said Merida, speaking up, "but I would really like to get out of this cave before we get into any more trouble."

"That is a great idea," said Hiccup. "I kind of need the bathroom."

The teenagers turned their back on the fireworm pit and the stone pillar. The Wodensfang watched intently as the shadows of the chosen warriors disappeared into the tunnels. He didn't bother curling up and falling into another blissful sleep. Instead, the ancient dragon sat there and pondered Hiccup's answer to the visions.

"'I'll make sure there will never be another King of the Wilderwest' he says?" Wodensfang chuckled to himself slightly. "He's a good boy isn't he, Grimbeard?"

The faded spirit of the deceased King couldn't help but nod in response. "As expected from the one who is destined to carry out my Will. He's much stronger than I imagined."

"Are you proud?"

"Very." Grimbeard took a deep breath in. "To think he would declare his resolution on this very island. It is what was left of the Great Empire of the Wilderwest. Now burned to ashes by hatred and betrayal."

"I bet you the boy will try to bring it back as a flourishing Kingdom on this very island as well," said Wodensfang.

"Whether or not will it be a Kingdom, I know not. I let my pride and hatred towards dragons cloud my judgement. And my youngest son had to pay the price. But Hiccup, who bares the same name has a destiny much different compared to mine. He will do the right thing."

"And that Jack Frost boy?"

"I'm sure North and Man in Moon have chosen well. The two girls are from the Third and Fourth worlds, I presume. The red-haired one reminds me of the Kingdom of DunBroch, the other of Corona. Judging from their personalities, it seems to be a very diverse team." Grimbeard turned to the Wodensfang. "I think we both know that that feeling. You were the first part of the very first group he chose. Quite an honor isn't it to be chosen as a Defender despite being a

dragon."

The Wodensfang mused over those words for a moment. "It's been over five hundred years, since then, Grimbeard. I was young and reckless." The old dragon chuckled. "They're facing an enemy as old as time itself, much like all the other generations of the Defenders of Realms."

"Yet he was never defeated, was he?" said Grimbeard. "Pitch Black, the embodiment of fear and darkness itself."

"It's a matter of two steps forward one step back," the Wodensfang explained. "Pitch has gotten stronger, but the humans have as well. The final battle is approaching, and I'm afraid we won't play major roles. We'll just have to leave our destinies to them."

Grimbeard smiled. "Isn't fate artistic?"

It was as if Grimbeard's words traveled directly through the caves, as Hiccup suddenly whipped his head around back towards the direction of the pit. He stopped walking for a moment, and stared into the shadows of the tunnels.

Merida was the only one to notice. She waved her torch in front of him slightly. "Something wrong, Hiccup?"

"Oh," Hiccup murmured, turning around. "Sorry. I thought I heard something. It must have just been my imagination."

Jack was up front leading the way back through the caves. He was checking every single turn to make sure they were on track to heading back. He didn't want to run into another Whispering Death.

The teenagers walked in mostly silence. Along the way, Hiccup would occasionally bring out the crown and gaze at it. This crown, a mere item, has the power of deciding the fate of the entire archipelago. No, that's not right. It's can decide the fate of all Four Worlds now. And he held that destiny in his hand.

"You have to admit it's a fancy trinket," said Jack. "I can imagine why Alvin would want it."

"But if he does get it, then that means all of our worlds are going to be living in darkness," Rapunzel reminded him. "Pitch is even helping him out, isn't he? Why would he do something like that."

"Alvin's a descendant of Thugheart," explained Hiccup. "Thugheart and Pitch fought together against Grimbeard. It's like they're continuing the fight."

"That just makes you Grimbeard," said Astrid.

"I don't _want_ to be Grimbeard."

"Because you would rather get on Toothless and fly off into the sunset," teased Merida.

"Exactly." Hiccup paused. "What?"

It was quiet for a moment. Astrid spoke up, "How far are we from the exit?"

"Heck, can we even be sure that the old hag is going to let us out?" Jack answered. "I don't like her. She smells of evil. And old people."

"Hey, I think I see the ladder," said Rapunzel. The teenagers quickly rushed over. In front of them was a long set of ladders leading up into Excellinor's little cottage back on the island of Hero's End. They were all relieved. But it lasted only for a moment. A loud crash was suddenly hard, followed by a bellowing roar.

"Was that-" Merida began.

"That was Toothless!" yelled Hiccup.

"What's happening up there?" asked Astrid.

"I'm not waiting around down here to find out," said Jack. He shoved the torch into Hiccup's hands before leaping into the air. A rush of wind followed Jack as he shot up right beside the rungs. He came to an abrupt halt, his head slamming into something hard.

"No fair, Jack gets to fly," Merida grumbled.

Rapunzel brought out her whip. She attached what looked like a hook to the tip of her whip. She lashed it upwards. It caught on one of the rungs and held. Rapunzel pressed the switch, and she was pulled up. "Jack! You okay up there?"

"I'm stuck!" the Guardian yelled from above.

Merida, Hiccup and Astrid started scrambling up the ladder. Rapunzel was a way ahead of them, and they hurried to catch up to her. But Rapunzel didn't wait either. She had already started climbing, occasionally using her whip to gain some extra speed.

Hiccup was careful to not bump the crown against the rungs. He lifted his head upwards. "Jack, what's going on up there!"

"The trapdoor's locked!"

"Well break it down!"

"What do you think I'm trying to do?"

For at least the tenth time, Jack slammed the tip of his staff against the door. It refused to budge. "Darn it, how hard is this thing?" He peered downwards. His friends were all catching up. If he wanted to launch a hard strike, he had to do it now before the others can get caught up in it.

Jack lowered himself. Shards of ice started to form, but Jack had trouble seeing it's size in the darkness. "I'll just estimate," he grumbled. Jack slammed the ice into the trapdoor. The locks gave way and the wooden planks shot up. Small pieces of debris started falling into the hole. Rapunzel held up her hands to prevent them from falling into her eyes.

"Too late for that," said Rapunzel as she held onto the rungs right next to them. Hiccup and the others were right below her.

Rapunzel was the first up. Hiccup quickly followed. He didn't wait for anyone else. Hiccup ran straight for the door. His eyes weren't prepared for the sudden change in light. The sun's rays glared at him mercilessly. It took a few precious moments for his eyes to adjust. And when they did, Hiccup was met with an unpleasant sight.

Savage, the leader of the Outcast group, stepped out from the group. The other teenagers by now had rushed to Hiccup's side, and all saw the scene in front of them. Excellinor was nowhere to be found.

"Relax, Hiccup," said Savage. "We only have him so that you would listen to us. I'm here to deliver a message from Alvin." As he spoke, Savage's eyes were focused on the crown around Hiccup's arm. He reached out into his pocket and brought out a rolled up piece of paper. He held it out to Hiccup.

Astrid and the others stood as Jack peered over Hiccup's shoulder in an attempt to read the note. Unfortunately, it was written in runes, and Jack couldn't understand. "What does it say?"

[illegible]

8. Assault

****Chapter Eight: Assault****

"Hiccup, Astrid," Jack began as he sat down beside the campfire. "That was overkill, you guys."

"They took Toothless!" Hiccup protested. "The Outcasts had it coming."

Astrid didn't say anything. She simply sat there on one of the logs, sharpening the blade of her axe. The Defenders circled the small fire, some skewered fish being grilled over the flickering flames.

As soon as Hiccup put down the note, he and Astrid went into rage attacking the Outcasts. Savage had to call a retreat if he didn't want his men to end up sliced up or knocked out. Rescuing Toothless was a snap after that. Stormfly even joined in the battle after she was freed by Merida and Rapunzel. The Outcasts didn't have much of a chance, and they hopped on their ships before sailing back to Berk as fast as they could.

Once they made sure all the Outcasts were gone, the teenagers set up a little camp on the isle of Hero's End. Firewood was taken from Excellinor's cottage. It seems that she had completely disappeared. As the night sky started appearing above them, they caught some fish and prepared dinner.

"Alvin says he wants the exchange done within twenty four hours. That means we have to be back at Berk before sunset tomorrow," said Hiccup. "If we give him that crown, we lose."

"But if we don't, you lose your father," Rapunzel pointed out.

"We don't even know if he even has your father," said Merida.

Hiccup sighed. "Exactly. There has to be a way we get keep both the crown and my father. But we'll have to do it fast. Because the end of Alvin's deadline is the time when we face our destinies."

"What makes you so sure?" Jack asked.

Hiccup smiled. "Because it's going to be the battle for Grimbeard's crown. Whoever ends up with it becomes King of the Wilderwest."

"What about Pitch?"

"He's definitely going to assist Alvin, so we attack him too."

"Hold on," Rapunzel interjected. "We're going on the offensive?"

"Reckless as usual, I see," Astrid commented. "But at least we're going to attack, we're going to need a plan. It's what, a bunch of teenagers and a bunch of dragons against an entire Outcast Tribe and the Lord of Nightmares."

"I don't like our odds," Jack grumbled.

"It's going to be tough, I'll admit that," said Hiccup. He thought for a moment before gesturing for his friends to come closer.

"Alright, this is what we're going to do!"

"The first thing I saw after becoming a spirit was seeing the moon. It chased the darkness away."

It was dead in the middle of night. The campfire had gone out, leaving the teenagers and the dragons camping in darkness. The only source of light came from the moon. Rapunzel and Merida were nowhere to be seen, as they both left on a little field trip. They promised that they would be back by dawn, just in time for them to leave.

Hiccup's back was leaning against Toothless. The dragon was curled up in a pleasant slumber. But its rider was gazing up at the stars, and the crescent moon. The gentle light was warm and inviting.

"He's watching over you, you know," said Jack who was standing just behind Toothless. The winter spirit chuckled. "The first thing I saw after becoming a spirit was seeing the moon. It chased the darkness away."

Hiccup chuckled. "You think Man in Moon was a Defender himself?"

Jack shrugged. "I don't see why not."

There was a moment of silence between the two of them. Hiccup let out a long breath out. "Tomorrow's the day, isn't it? We're ending the battle between the Defenders and Pitch. To be honest, it feels kind of honorable."

"Really?" Jack replied. "It feels more like we're the errand kids to me."

Hiccup couldn't help but laugh. "I guess that's true."

"Remember when our adventure started out?" Jack asked. "You nearly rammed me on Toothless."

"You were the one who appeared out of thin air," Hiccup said in his defense. "Not my fault I couldn't stop the dragon. Not to mention I saved your life right afterwards."

"Only because you had me drop the staff." Jack paused. "You think the girls are okay?"

"They'll be fine, Jack-ow!"

A rock had slammed itself into Hiccup's forearm. He gazed in the direction of where the rock came from, only to find a half asleep half awake Astrid glaring back at him. "Can't you two keep it down?"

"Okay, okay, we'll stop talking," Jack murmured, dodging a pebble himself. The winter spirit turned to Hiccup. "Is she always like this?"

"More or less-hey!" That night, Hiccup went to sleep rubbing some new bruises.

"Rapunzel, Astrid, head to the cove. You know what to do. Merida, as soon as we land, go with Toothless and stay hidden at Gobber's

workshop, and wait for the signal. Jack, you stick close to me, but stay behind and stay hidden. Everyone, you know your positions. Let's get going."

"I'll see you soon, Hiccup," said Astrid as she started pulling Stormfly in the direction of the woods. She gave him a little salute, and slowly, the girls and the Deadly Nadder was out of sight.

Several minutes later, Toothless glided gracefully into the island of Berk. Hiccup pulled them to a stop just outside the entrance to the harbor. He and Merida hopped off Toothless as Jack landed next to them.

"Merida, you can get to the workshop, right?" asked Hiccup.

"I'll find my way," the princess replied. "Worse case scenario, I'll have Toothless guide me."

"Good luck," said Jack. Without another word, Hiccup grabbed a satchel that was secured onto Toothless and the group split into two. Hiccup turned to Jack. "We're going to have to walk the rest of the way."

The two of them walked through the village of Berk in sheer silence. Not a single person was in sight. Many of the windows were shut. The animals were all locked up in the barn. At various points, the Outcast Flag was blowing proudly in the wind. Jack could tell from the glare Hiccup sent each one of those flags that they are going to get mercilessly burned down.

Hiccup stopped one turn away from the Great Hall. "Jack, stay behind the houses."

Jack nodded. "Got it."

The two of them parted ways. Hiccup took a deep breath in. He made his way towards the Great Hall and across the open plaza. He could see his house in the hillside and Gobber's workshop just some ways to his left. Standing at the end of the stairs leading up to the Great Hall was Alvin the Treacherous, Pitch Black, and a massive army of Outcast Warriors and Nightmares.

Hiccup swallowed the lump in his throat and he stepped closer. Alvin wasn't more than five meters from him.

"You come alone?" questioned Pitch.

Hiccup didn't answer. Instead, his expression seemed confident, but he couldn't help but feel nervous on the inside.

"It matters not," said Alvin. "It seems that you've grown just a little wiser in the last couple of months, Hiccup. I take it that you have the crown?"

Hiccup reached into his satchel and brought out the golden accessory. The moment Alvin caught a glimpse of it, his eyes lit up with greed. "Perfect. Hand it over to me, boy."

Hiccup placed the crown back into the satchel. He pulled the strap

over his head. It seems that he was a little reluctant to pass it to Alvin.

The Outcast chief was growing rather impatient. "Stop wasting time and give it to me!"

A devious grin made it's way to Hiccup's face. "Alright. If you insist." With an underarm swing of his arm, Hiccup threw the satchel into the air. Alvin held out his hands, ready to catch it.

But right in the middle of the air, an arrow appeared out of nowhere. It caught onto the strap and the force pulled the satchel away from Alvin's grasp. Alvin and Pitch stared in wonder as the strap was pinned right onto the wall of one of the nearby houses.

There was a loud whinny from all of the Nightmares, followed by shouts and cries from the Outcasts. A rain of fire from the mouth of a Monstrous Nightmare came down from above. Astrid flew overhead the Great Hall, leading the Berk Dragon Academy. The group touched down beside Hiccup, quickly joined by Toothless who suddenly appeared from the shadows of the village.

"Ha! How did you like that, you Outcasts!" Snotlout hollered.

"It's time we blow things up!" exclaimed the twins, clashing their helmets together. Fishlegs couldn't help but laugh nervously. "You guys are not subtle."

Astrid turned to Hiccup. "Did we take too long?"

"For DunBroch!" There was an extremely energetic war cry as Fergus and a great deal of warriors from the Kingdom of DunBroch rode in from one side of the Great Hall. Merida walked out from the Gobber's workshop. Fergus looked at his daughter. "That was a fine shot, Merida."

"Were you going to leave us out of the fight?" Eugene and the thieves from the Ugly Duckling appeared from the other end of the village. Including Hookhand, so decided to take a day off from playing the piano, and Vladimir who figured he could leave his ceramic unicorn collection.

Gobber stood beside Eugene, and next to the former thief was Maximus with a frying pan at the ready. Leading them all was Rapunzel.

"Is that everyone?" she asked.

"Ho, ho, ho!" A set of colored eggs were thrown into the air. Pitch ducked on instinct, narrowly avoiding small explosions. From the rooftops, Bunnymund leaped up and touched down on the ground. He was followed by North, who drew his blades, Tooth Fairy who had a large squad of fairies with her, Baby Tooth among them, and Sandman with his bright golden sands.

Jack slipped out from the Guardians. "Looks like the girls' little field trip went well."

All the forces gathered together, forming one large army. Everyone from all of the Four Worlds with whom our heroes have met and formed alliances with were present. Guardians from the First World, Dragon

Riders from the Second, and brave warriors from the Third and Fourth.

Pitch and Alvin looked at their enemies contently. For right in front of the massive battalion were four figures. The Defenders of Realms stood proudly. Rapunzel of Corona, Merida of DunBroch, Hiccup Horrendous Haddock the Third and Jack Frost.

Hiccup gestured to all of his friends before facing his arch nemesis. "Sorry to burst your bubble, Alvin. But I'm never alone."

There was a tense moment of silence as the two sides-light and dark-faced each other. Alvin brought out his weapons, and Pitch called upon his Nightmares.

With a loud battle cry, Alvin charged forward. Pitch brought both of his arms behind him before suddenly shooting them ahead, a large wave of onyx horses appearing from the darkness. Jack leaped into the air. He swung his staff and a brilliant blue beam exploded from it's tips. Running towards Alvin, Hiccup drew Endeavour. In an instant, forces black and blue crashed into each other as two blades collided with the sound of clashing metal in a bright white ring.

The final battle had begun.

[illegible]

Alright, that's where I'm going to end it. Look out for Chapter Nine: "Separate Battles".

9. Separate Battles

Sorry again for the long wait! But here you go, the first of the two climax chapters.

****Chapter Nine: Separate Battles****

Pandemonium exploded in the plaza.

Following the first strike by Hiccup and Jack against Alvin and Pitch, the armies of both sides went berserk. Nightmares charged blindly, and Outcast Warriors became more violent and fierce than ever. All of Berk's villagers hid their children in houses before grabbing their axes and swords and joined the fray.

Astrid was close to the other Dragon Riders, keeping the Outcasts and Nightmares away from the armory. It was a literal ring of fire as Hookfang engulfed himself in flames. Snotlout stood in front of the dragon, bludgeon at the ready and smashing away at any Nightmare or Outcast that came in a three foot range. "Now this is what I'm talking about!"

Fishlegs was from above, with Meatlug firing chunks of burning rocks at the Nightmares that came from the sky. Assisting Fishlegs and Meatlug were the twins on Barf and Belch. The two heads of the Zippleback shot out streams of dark green gas before the other head sends out sparks. An explosion erupted in the sky, catching a group

of Nightmares off guard.

"Blowing things up," said Tuffnut.

"It's what we do best," Ruffnut finished.

In the center of the plaza were the thieves from the Ugly Duckling. They were dealing against the largest Outcast Battalion. Vladimir crushed some skulls together, while Hookhand was easily parrying sword blows with his hook. With a simple swing, he knocked a sword clean out of an Outcast's hand before throwing in an upper cut.

"Haha, this is good fun!" North laughed merrily. With his dual blades, he was on a roll, slicing Nightmares coming from all directions. Tooth was up in the sky. Darting around so quickly that you could barely follow her with your eyes, she took down a line up of Nightmares. Tooth stopped mid-air, letting out an exhausted sigh. She turned to Baby Tooth. "I think my battle skills have gotten a little rusty."

"Don't drop your guard yet, mate!"

Tooth ducked as a boomerang flew over her head, striking a Nightmare coming from behind. The weapon whirled in the air before falling back to the hand of its owner atop one of the houses. The Easter Bunny gave the Tooth Fairy a slightly smug smile.

Sandy lashed out a massive whip made of pure golden dream sand. It passed through the Nightmares, turning them to dust. A large black cloud began to surround him in all directions. Anxiety started to grow inside the Sandman. The Nightmares were boxing him in.

There was a blast of fire from above, dispersing a pile of Nightmares. Sandman looked up to notice a Gronckle flying over head. Fishlegs gave the Guardian a determined smile. "We'll help you up here," he said, the twins appearing beside him. The Sandman gave the dragon riders a nod.

Elsewhere, Fergus and some soldiers from DunBroch have practically gone berserk. They made a beeline directly for Berk's prison. Fergus raised up his prosthetic leg and kicked an Outcast right in the stomach. "Make way!" he bellowed.

Fergus punched his path through a line of Outcasts, knocking them into side of the walls. It didn't take Fergus long to reach the end of the corridor, where a large man was bound by chains, locked in a cell guarded by metal bars. One of the smaller soldiers quickly popped in between Fergus and the door. He took out a key and inserted it into the lock with a click.

Stoick slowly lifted his head upwards. "You are?"

"Fergus, King of DunBroch. I'm assisting your son and his friends in this epic battle." The soldier barely had time to move away when Fergus decided to bust down the door. With a swing of his sword, the King cut away Stoick's chains. The wounded chief pushed himself against the stone walls as he got up to his feet. "Do you have a spare sword?"

"Of course I do!" Fergus laughed, drawing one from a nearby guard and passed it to Stoick. "What would you like to do?"

Stoick forced out a grin. "I'm going to help my son."

In the center of the plaza, Merida and Rapunzel's backs were suddenly pressed together. Panting, Rapunzel lashed her whip out at one of the approaching Outcasts. Merida placed three arrows in between her fingers and pulled on nocking point. The arrows flew into the chests of charging Nightmares.

"Where are Jack and Hiccup?" Merida asked, almost desperately.

"We got separated," Rapunzel replied. She shot forward to kick an Outcast before quickly moving away to defend Merida's back. "I'm getting a little worried about them. We have to regroup."

"We can find Jack easily. We just look for anything shiny and blue. But how are we going to catch up with Hiccup?"

A ferocious roar rattled the atmosphere. Many of the Outcasts stopped attacking out of surprise and Rapunzel hurriedly finished them off with a large slash. She turned her head left and right, looking for the source of the cry. "Was thatâ€œ"

"Toothless," Merida finished. "Come on, let's at least get to Hiccup."

In the craziness of the battle, Hiccup whipped his head around. Toothless was held back by dozens of Outcasts. Their large hands brought in ropes and muzzles, and many of them attempted to pile up onto Toothless' tail and wings. Hiccup shot a glance to his right. Alvin was running towards the satchel pinned to the side of the house. And that satchel, contained the Crown of the Wilderwest.

Hiccup took a single step closer to Toothless. The Night Fury shook some Outcasts off it's mouth and roared. Hiccup froze in his tracks. Toothless looked at Hiccup with stern eyes. Hiccup's teeth bit into his lip. He was reluctant to leave Toothless behind. In the corner of his eye, Hiccup could see Alvin closing in on the satchel.

"I'll be back, Toothless," Hiccup said before swiftly darting off. Sword in hand, Hiccup slipped through the battling crowds, Alvin's back in sight. The Outcast chief peered over his shoulder. Seeing Hiccup right behind him, Alvin drew his sword.

"Alright, boy," Alvin began, "it seems that I'll have to deal with you first." The second Hiccup stepped in range of Alvin's sword, the Outcast instantly made a swipe for Hiccup's neck. With a sudden flick and a blank face, Hiccup parried Alvin's blow. Alvin was clearly surprised. A small wave of anxiety shot through his nerves.

Hiccup brandished his sword. A whoosh sound was clearly audible. "I am not going to let you become King of the Wilderwest".

Alvin growled between gritted teeth. "You think you can defeat me?"

Hiccup narrowed his brows at the rhetorical question. He had no idea

could he pull out victorious in a battle against Alvin. He did know one thing. And he was sure Alvin was aware of it too. "I'm just not going to let you win."

With a battle cry, Alvin was the first to strike. His sword was directed straight at Hiccup's chest. Hiccup lifted his own blade, ready for a defensive counterstrike. At the last moment, Alvin pulled back his blade slightly. He moved it to the side, directly towards Hiccup's open torso.

Hiccup barely had time to react. His arm moved on his own. The two swords quickly made contact as Hiccup was sloppily able to guard against Alvin. The Outcast Chief chuckled arrogantly. "Did your instructor not teach you such moves?"

Alvin started raining fast and thick blows on Hiccup. The young boy's arms whizzed around frantically blocking the attacks. Each strike sent a shock through Hiccup's body that rattled his insides. His stance began to falter. After parrying one of the lunges, Hiccup recoiled a couple of feet.

His heart was beating in his ears and sweat tricked down his temples. Hiccup took a deep breath in. His heart refused to slow down. Alvin was in a much better state, standing up straight with his sword poised for attack. Sitting beside Alvin's feet a fallen warrior. Hiccup noticed the viking's belt.

It only took seconds for Hiccup to push himself forward. His pointed his sword for Alvin's chest. The Outcast had a smug grin on his face, and Hiccup's sword simply made contact with the face of Alvin's blade. "That's not going to work, boy."

A smirk curled up Hiccup's lips. Alvin didn't expect it, and the mere sight of the confident light in Hiccup's eyes made him nervous.

Hiccup could see his right hand in the corner of his eye. He pushed harder against Alvin's blade. Hiccup's right hand reached for the body of the unmoving warrior. His fingers wrapped themselves around a hilt. Just as Alvin eyes widened, Hiccup drew the extra sword, and brought it's point into the side of Alvin's torso.

Alvin took a large step back, and Hiccup moved out of the way as well, the spare sword dropping to the ground. The blade had pierced Alvin's chain armor, and now a splotch of red was growing. Alvin shot Hiccup a murderous glare. "It seems that I have underestimated you."

"Did you think I was staring at the sky for three months, Alvin?"

The Outcast Chief snarled in disgust. Alvin lowered his head and spat on the floor. He brought up his sword again and ran forward. Hiccup matched Alvin's movements and charged as well. Hiccup made a downwards swipe. Alvin neatly sidestepped. He lifted up the sword, aiming for Hiccup's hip. The edge of the blade scratched through Hiccup's tunic and onto his skin, leaving a slash.

Hiccup immediately shifted away and thrust his blade forward. Alvin didn't turn in time, and Endeavour left a cut on the Outcast's face.

Alvin was distracted. Hiccup pulled his sword back for a moment before shooting it forward. The blade left a gash in Alvin's stomach. Hiccup hurriedly backed away. He looked at Alvin with sorrowful eyes. "I didn't want to have to do that, Alvin. But I had to. I can't give you a chance to become King of the Wilderwest."

Alvin forced out a dry chuckle. "Soft as usual, Hiccup." With that, Alvin fell to the ground, leaving Hiccup the standing heir to Grimbeard the Ghastly.

The pain from Alvin's cut started making it's way through Hiccup's body. He became reluctant to move, and every muscle started to ache. Exhausted and wheezing, Hiccup lifted his head up to the sky. His body tensed up immediately. Hiccup watched in horror as a cloud of black and blue collide. And Jack fell from the skies.

[illegible]

Is this chapter a little too short? (sobs) The next chapter will be entitled "The Power that Triumphs Over Fear". Okay, it sounds a little cliché and lame, but bear with me...

10. The Power That Triumphs Over Fear

This chapter was the hardest to write in the entire series...

****Chapter Ten: The Power That Triumphs Over Fear****

With his body feeling heavy, Stoick forced himself through the frenzy of the battlefield. His eyes darted from person to person, eagerly looking for his opponent. Fergus had left the chief's side to join the Ugly Duckling thieves, leaving Stoick slightly staggering towards one of the houses. He noticed that a satchel's strap hang from it's wall. Lying at the feet of the house wasâ€œ"

"Alvin?" Stoick murmured. The chief brought out a sword, and took careful steps towards the Outcast. Stoick poked Alvin with the point of his sword. He couldn't help but chuckle to himself, a feeling of pride swelling in his chest. "Huh. It seems that Hiccup had beaten me to the job. I never expected him to improve so much in just three months. That's my boy."

Stoick's ears picked up a roar from amidst the crowd of brawls. Turning around, his sights fell on Toothless struggling against a gang of burly Outcasts. The Night Fury bellowed as it tried to shake the Outcasts of himself. Stoick gripped the hilt of his sword. "I guess I'll take care of the dragon!"

[illegible]

For a moment, everything turned gray. Jack's entire body was sent flying backwards, the sharp winds scathing his skin. He came to a violent stop as his body slammed into the ground. Jack's mind was rattled, and his thoughts became cloudy. His head felt as if it was

being pounded with a heavy hammer. Groaning, the Winter Spirit slowly pulled himself up onto his feet.

Specks on the floor seemed to have multiplied. Jack could feel his mouth hanging agape, his brain still stunned. He shook his head slightly and pushed himself upwards with his staff. Jack lifted up his head, only to be met with the sight of Pitch looming over him. The dark spirit was casually standing atop a large swirl of black sand.

"Is that the best you can do Jack?" Pitch cooed. He seemed to be checking his nails. "It seems that I really have overestimated you."

Jack's breath hitched for a moment. Jack's legs nudged himself back into the air. His path wavered slightly as Jack struggled to regain his balance. Jack brought the side of his staff up to eye level and aimed the G-tipped end towards Pitch. Pure blue ice bullets shot from the staff, aimed directly for Pitch.

The small fragments of ice whizzed past Pitch's skin. He held out his hand. Black dust gathered into a cluster, forming a shield that blocked Jack's ammunition. Furrowing his eyebrows, Jack grunted as instead of pellets, a brilliant azure beam flew from the staff. Pitch gasped as the blue laser-like light shattered his guard. The dark spirit didn't dodge in time, and the light flew by his face, leaving a cut on his face.

Panting lightly, Jack brought his staff down and a small inward grin appeared on his face. Pitch gave the young guardian deadly scowl. He lashed out his arm. A black whip shot out and slammed Jack in the stomach. Within seconds, he was pushed back onto the ground.

Grumbling in pain, Jack's arm pushed himself onto his knees. His staff was sitting right beside his hands. Pitch lowered his altitude, a dark black orb forming in his palms

. "You've been a hindrance to me long enough, Jack Frost," he spat almost venomously. "Your time ended three hundred years ago. It's time for you to get your well deserved rest."

Pitch threw his arm forward, launching a cannonball of flawless darkness. The attack sliced through the air as if it didn't even exist. Jack's eyes widened as the blackness drew closer. He wanted to move, but his arms and legs were paralyzed. Jack's thoughts started slowing down.

This isâ€¦ he thought as anxiety filled his heart, _fear? _

There was the sound of clashing metal. A small moment of stillness followed, as standing in front of Jack with his waistcoat blowing slightly from the force was the back of Jack's own second in command.

"Hiccup?"

Grimbeard's heir stood in a strong defensive stance with his sword drawn and pointed forward. Pitch's attack had been severed in half, the two semi-circles of black sands dissolving the moment they

touched Endeavour.

It didn't take long for Jack to come back to his senses this time. "Hiccup, I thought you were fighting Alvin!"

The young boy threw the blade slightly in the air before altering his grip. "I took care of him. It looks like you're in need of some help, leader. Come on, get up. You can't have your teammates do all the work."

A mischievous smirk curled up Jack's mouth. "Says the one who wants to take on everything himself. Man, you were training like crazy."

Hiccup became tempted to roll his eyes. "Well what else would you expect me to do?"

The sound of Pitch's growls could be heard all the way from the ground. The dark spirit readied another attack. Onyx dust formed a bow and shaft in his hands. Pitch pulled against the bow's string and prepared his shot. "You think you two have time to be chatting with each other? It just means I just have to finish where Alvin left off."

Jack's hand quickly reached out to grab his staff. Hiccup's eyes narrowed as he got ready to take the full force of Pitch's attack.

As the dark spirit allowed the arrow to fly, it came at the two boys with incredible speed. Then in a shower of silver particles, the arrow disappeared. Merida stood proudly atop one of the nearby roofs. Her own bow was already aligned for another shot. "Don't you boys ever leave any fun for the rest of us?"

With the sound of a recoiling strap, Rapunzel landed beside Hiccup. "You just went off and took on the enemy without waiting for us. Be more like gentlemen and be more considerate."

Merida hopped off the house and touched down beside Jack. "Pitch did us right in back in the clearing three months ago. It's time we all had Round 2 against him."

The girls and Hiccup were not free of injuries. Jack could see the sharp lacerate cut Alvin had left on Hiccup. Merida and Rapunzel were covered in bruises and they had scratches over their arms and legs. Inside, Jack told himself that if he was the leader, he's going to have to take on much more than his teammates.

Merida brought out two arrows from her quiver and positioned them onto the nocking point. Rapunzel flourished her whip onto the grass. Hiccup adjusted his hold on the hilt of his sword. Jack twirled the staff in his air for a moment before pointing it right at their opponent.

"Alright, Pitch," he declared. "This is where the real battle begins."

Pitch looked down at the Defenders of Realms all lined up against him with a rather disgusted look on his face. "This is just a futile effort."

"Is it?" Jack replied. "If you really do dare to face us, you wouldn't be hiding up in that cloud of yours up there."

A small light of anger flickered in Pitch's eyes. His body started to blend in with his own Nightmares. A flurry of black shot from the skies towards the ground, ebony sand impaling itself into the ground between Jack and Merida like a spear.

The Defenders leaped backwards and turned their heads, all their weapons at the ready. The moment Pitch's shadow started appearing, Rapunzel struck first with a swing of a whip. With a beautiful curve, it pounded Pitch in his stomach.

The dark spirit was forced back several steps. Merida unleashed her arrows. Pitch pulled up his arm along with a black shield made of Nightmares. The arrows buried itself into the face of the shield.

Pitch let out a chuckle. "Is that all you can do?" The grin was quickly wiped off his face when a silver blade arched over his head. Pitch ducked in the nick of time, Hiccup's sword missing him by a hair. Hiccup's pupils followed Pitch as he kicked at Hiccup's fresh wound. With a shriek of pain, Hiccup dropped Endeavour.

"That's dirty!" Jack shot in, jabbing the tip of his staff into Pitch's torso. He was pushed toward a tree, as Jack and Merida closed in on him. Rapunzel was kneeling down next to Hiccup. "Hiccup, you okay?"

A cough escaped Hiccup's lips and one of his arms gripped his injury. "I'm fine," he choked out. He picked up the hilt of his sword and pushed himself upwards.

Jack took a step towards Pitch. "You can't go around acting arrogant forever. Fear and darkness has to be afraid of something."

Pitch pretended to act as if he were thinking. "No," he replied with a nonchalant face. Black sands started materializing in his hands, a coal colored scythe forming. The frost beside Jack solidified into a light blue ice dagger. He flung it towards Pitch. The dark spirit wielded the scythe, and slashed Jack's attack away. Merida grabbed another arrow and aimed it for Pitch's chest.

It made contact with the side of Pitch's shoulder, leaving him startled. Before the injury got to him, two shots of darkness shot from Pitch's palms, striking both Merida and Jack. The two of them crouched down, clutching their stomachs. Jack was breathing heavily, as his body now struggled to keep up with Pitch's attacks.

Hiccup and Rapunzel rushed over, directing their weapons at Pitch. The dark spirit couldn't help but sigh, tired at the sight of the Defenders. "You still keep on insisting that we continue this battle? It's obvious who's winning."

With a determined gleam in the eyes of Hiccup and Rapunzel, they refused to lower their weapons.

Pitch leaped into the air, towering above the Defenders. Jack and Merida looked up to see the lord of Nightmares gathering the black

sands into one big wave. Jack quickly lifted himself up and stood beside his teammates. He held out his staff. "Guys, get behind me."

With a roar of effort, Pitch gestured his arms forward, and the massive surge of Nightmares rushed towards the Defenders. Jack swung his staff upwards and large wall of ice shot up from the ground.

There was a brief moment of relief.

A loud crack was heard and within seconds, Jack's defensive shield immediately collapsed. From the sky, Pitch could hear the muffled cries from the heroes, buried under his sea of Nightmares. As the sands dissolved, Pitch touched down onto the ground. Jack, Hiccup, Merida and Rapunzel lay scattered on the floor, their bodies barely moving.

"In the end, this was once again a one sided fight," Pitch murmured. "If you can't defeat me, then there is nothing for me to fear in all of the worlds!"

They say when you're on the verge of death, you will see your life flash before your eyes. Hiccup's mind was wandering back to the time when he was only an infant. His mother was cradling him in her gentle hands. Words started floating into his mind, and only now did Hiccup realize that he understood their meanings.

Jack propped himself onto his shoulders, his joints aching all over. Merida and Rapunzel lifted themselves up, but their bodies refused to move by much.

"You guys okay?" Jack asked weakly.

"We've been better," Merida replied.

"This isn't going well, is it," Rapunzel whispered.

The last one to get back up was Hiccup. He buried the tip of his sword into the grass. Pushing his weight onto the blade, Hiccup lifted himself up. His eyes still glowed with the adrenaline of battle.

Pitch had an amused smile on his face. "You still insist on fighting? I've pinned you all down time and time again." Pitch started laughing manically as he pointed towards Hiccup's shaking body. "Look at that, you're barely able to stand!"

"He has stubbornness issues," Jack added.

"I admire your tenacity, Hiccup," Pitch mused. "But it's about time you cough up your last words."

"I will cough up some words," Hiccup replied. "But they just won't be my last ones."

Pitch raised an eyebrow suspiciously as he eyed the young heir. Hiccup declared in a loud voice, "All may be lost, and our hearts may be worn. But a hero fights forever."

"Talking gibberish now?" said Pitch. "You must be desperate."

"It's not gibberish," Hiccup replied sternly. "It's part of what my mother used to sing to me every night. I never understood what it meant, until now."

Upon hearing those words, Jack dug the tip of his staff into the ground and pressed his weight onto it. "Things look pretty bad," he said. "It might not get any worse than this."

Merida was the next to speak. "We may have been defeated before, and maybe we're even discouraged now. But we're not going to give up."

"We were chosen to become heroes of our worlds. If we stop fighting youâ€" Rapunzel shook her head. "No. There is no if. We're never going to stop fighting. For the rest of our lives if we have to."

Jack now stood boldly on his feet, staff in hand. "You can try to keep us down all you want. You can try to stop us all you want. But it's our duty to fight the darkness. If you want us to stop, then you're going to have to do it over our dead bodies."

All four Defenders had picked themselves up and were now all back on their feet with their weapons at the ready.

A strange feeling started crawling throughout Pitch's chest. He was becoming uncertain. "Why! Why, why, why! I've pinned you all down time and time again! You're battered and bruised! You've seen the difference in power between us, and yet you still refuse to accept the fact that you've lost!"

It was then that Pitch realized that the emotion he was feeling, the sensation that had been crawling down his nerves was fear. Because he was standing in the one thing that can fight against fear: Courage.

Pitch was scared. He might actually be defeated. Century after century he managed to keep himself going. But he was worried, frightened, that he had finally reached the end of the line.

"Pitch," Jack began, seriousness in his voice. "Why don't we end this?"

Pitch's answer was a cold stare. The dark sands started to gather at his feet, and the Defenders shifted their positions. There was a cheerful roar from behind. Hiccup turned around, and found that a certain dragon was running straight towards him.

"Toothless!" Hiccup cried. The Night Fury pounced right onto Hiccup, giving him a good lick on the face. Hiccup couldn't help but laugh from joy. "But how did you get free?" He paused, knowing inside that he already knew the answer. _Thanks, Dad._

There seemed to be a clash of thunder, snapping Hiccup back to reality. Toothless gave Hiccup some space and the boy stood up. "What do we do now?"

"We finish things off," said Jack. He held his staff up in front of him. "You guys keep Pitch busy and buy me some time. I'm going to try to do _that_."

Rapunzel turned to Jack. "Are you really going to do it?"

Jack furrowed his eyebrows. "Now's a better time than any to test it out."

"Butâ€" " Rapunzel began to protest.

"If our leader says so, leave it to him," Hiccup cut in. "Leave Pitch to us. Gather all the strength you need, Jack." With those words, Hiccup sheathed his sword and threw his over Toothless' back. His left foot clicked into place. Toothless leaped into the sky, and he and Hiccup disappeared into the clouds above.

Pitch followed the dragon rider pair with his eyes. He was about to go after them when an arrow whizzed by his face, preventing him from taking a step forward. Merida had her bow poised and ready. "You're not going anywhere."

Raising a hand, Pitch prepared to strike Merida. His arm suddenly became unable to move. Rapunzel had the end of her whip wrapped around Pitch's wrist. "Hold it right there." Rapunzel yanked the whip backwards, pulling Pitch to the floor and she quickly recoiled.

Growling, Pitch got back up to his feet, when an explosion erupted in his face. From the side, Merida had her arrows aimed for attack. The arrowheads were not her regular silver. Instead, they were bright crimson. "A little present from the Witch," said Merida. "She wanted us to get in some hits for her."

Merida let loose another shot, and the arrow bursted into flames beside Pitch's shoulders. The dark spirit was stunned and dazed. His stance faltered slightly.

When Pitch had just about regained his composition, a high pitched screech came from the above. Toothless dived down from the skies, a blast of fire flying out of his mouth. The attack landed a direct hit on Pitch. The dragon pulled up just as he was approaching the ground, and skimmed along the grass with it's large wings spread out.

Hiccup stood up on Toothless' saddle with his hand on his hilt. As Toothless flew forward, Hiccup drew his blade sideways. The arc from his sword sliced through Pitch's body, leaving the dark spirit exclaiming in surprise and pain.

Hiccup quickly sheathed Endeavour as Toothless started to regain altitude. "Jack!" he yelled. "The rest is up to you!"

"Finish him off!" cried Merida.

"I've got that much figured out," the winter spirit replied. For a moment, Jack's eyes were closed as he built his concentration. Jack opened them, and touched the tip of his staff to the earth. Particles of ice materialized in the air. The small bits and pieces started gathering, clumping together into two separate larger masses. Within a few moments, two figures appeared by Jack's sides: a dragon and a

bear, made purely of magic ice.

But they weren't statues. They were alive, and the bear took a giant step forward, its impact shaking the ground. Jack pointed his staff towards Pitch, and the creatures sprung towards the dark spirit.

"You can't win forever!" Pitch shouted. "There will always be fear and darkness!" His voice was covered up as the dragon and bear simultaneously let out threatening roars, engulfing the dark spirit in a blast of blue and white. Snow and frost were propelled straight into the air, creating a fountain that reached for the clouds, and a rumbling eruption that could be heard throughout the entire Isle of Berk.

The fighting in the plaza gradually came to a stop, and the sounds of clashing blades ceased to be heard. Many of the Outcasts and Nightmares had fallen, but there were still a few stubborn ones that remained. Astrid turned to the skies, and noticed the column of ice. In fact, the gazes of everyone else started redirecting their gazes towards the heavens, as little by little, snowflakes started to fall upon the village.

North held out his hand, and a small little pellet of snow landed in the middle of his palm. The old Guardian grinned. "Job well done, Jack."

The signal of falling snow marked the end of the battle. Without the need for words, a message was clearly understood: the Defenders had pulled out victorious.

"We won!" Fergus bellowed loudly, throwing a fist in the air. He was joined by the DunBroch warriors, Snotlout, the twins, and Stoick and Gobber. Eugene's eyes were still worried. "Rapunzel, are you alright?"

Astrid let out an anxious sigh. "Hiccup!"

After several moments, the frost and ice started to disappear. Pitch was nowhere in sight, with only a pile of black sand remaining. Toothless landed on the ground beside Jack as he, Merida and Rapunzel regrouped. Hiccup slid off Toothless' saddle to join his friends.

Pitch's last words echoed in Jack's mind, a smile coming to his face. "Then there will always be those who fight the darkness." With that, Jack's knees buckled. Rapunzel brought up her arms, just in time to loop Jack up by the shoulders.

"Thanks, Rapunzel," Jack wheezed. "That last attack took a lot more energy than I thought."

Hiccup quickly flopped down to the floor with dropping shoulders. "You're telling me. I had to go through two serious battles." He breathed out a heavy sigh. "I need a break."

Merida laughed wholeheartedly as Rapunzel lowered herself and Jack into a sitting position. Merida sat down herself and placed her bow beside her. "Looks like we're all in need of some rest."

"Well it's not like you can drop out now," said Merida. "Your Coronation's all set up, so I guess you're going to have to get crowned."

With a concerned and wary face, Hiccup redirected his gaze to the ground. Around the ringed platform surrounding the fire in the center of the Great Hall, Stoick the Vast stepped up. "Attention all!" he bellowed, and the chattering in the hall died down. "I'm sure you are enjoying this feast. But I would like to introduce to you the heroes of our worlds: Jackson Overland Frost, Hiccup Horrendous Haddock the Third, Merida of DunBroch and Rapunzel of Corona! Step forward."

"That's our cue," said Jack, headed up to the stage. Hiccup got up and he and the girls followed him through the crowd. The moment Jack's face was visible above the heads of the guests, the Great Hall erupted into a large cheer. Sandy threw up some small golden sands that popped into miniature fireworks. This certainly caught the attention of the other three worlds, whom had never even heard of such a thing.

As Hiccup, Merida and Rapunzel took their places on the stage, the cheering became louder, with every single one of the worlds cheering mostly for the representative of their own world.

Stoick continued his announcement. "It is thanks to their bravery and courage that we managed to snatch victory from the hands of darkness. They are the Defenders of Realms!"

Another wave of whoops and hurrahs came from the crowd. Stoick gestured for everyone to fall silent. "And now, it is time to crown our new King of the Wilderwest: my son, Hiccup Horrendous Haddock the Third!"

Jack, Merida and Rapunzel took a pace backward, leaving Hiccup up front. Stoick stepped to the side as Gobber and Gothi made their way up onto the stage. In Gobber's hands, he carried the lost crown of the Wilderwest.

Hiccup swallowed the lump growing in his throat. His eyes scanned the crowd. He spotted his group of friends: Astrid, Snotlout, Fishlegs and the twins among the sea of people. They were all smiling back at him and nodding him encouraging looks. Hiccup turned to face Gobber.

"Kneel," the blacksmith said.

"I'm not going to be getting anymore creepy visions, am I?" Hiccup thought as he lowered himself onto one knee. Just as he was thinking, his memories thought back to when he was seeing the spirits of the previous Kings. What was it that he told him? Didn't he say that there wouldn't be another King of the Wilderwest? Wasn't Hiccup about to break his own promise?

He was abruptly snapped back to reality by Gobber's voice.

"By the power vested in me by Odin, Thor and the other gods that watch over us—" Gobber slowly brought the crown down above Hiccup's head. "I hereby dub thee, Hiccup Horrendous the Third, King of the

Wilderâ€™"

"Wait," Hiccup suddenly said, moving away from the crown and standing up. "I'm not going to accept it."

Confused murmurs came from the people as they were trying to understand why would Hiccup do such a thing, and Hiccup could catch some of the skeptic comments. Jack, Merida and Rapunzel exchanged nervous glances.

"Hiccup," Rapunzel began, "what are you doing?"

Hiccup looked at his friends. "What I think is the right thing to do." Jack gave him a stern nod, saying that he understood. Hiccup turned back to the crowd standing in front of him. He found that he immediately had their attention.

"People of the Four Worlds," Hiccup began in a clear and decisive voice, "I refuse to accept the title of King of the Wilderwest. It is not what we need. What if the darkness returns? A King of the Wilderwest won't be able to fight it off on his own. The only reason we were successful in this battle was that all of us, all Four Worlds, united against a single cause. It proves that if we combine our abilities, we can do anything. If I were to become King of the Wilderwest, I would guarantee you that I would not be able to fight Pitch on my own. The Defenders of Realms wouldn't have been able to win alone either. Each and every one of you who appeared on Berk three days ago were all vital parts to the battle. It is because that we worked together as one did we manage to be victorious.

There will be no more King of the Wilderwest. I would like to shift that power to a council. A new council that keeps the Four Worlds together and continue this era of peace. If any one supports this idea, please let me know."

There was a moment of stillness. The people of the Worlds slowly processed Hiccup's words. The Guardians were among the first to start the applause. The Dragon Riding teens quickly followed. As did the thieves of the Ugly Duckling and the soldiers from DunBroch. Within seconds, the Great Hall became filled with a roaring applause.

Hiccup felt as if a huge weight had been lifted off his chest. Jack stepped up to his second in command. "Hiccup," he began, "you just gave us a lot more work."

[illegible]

"I need the tapestries covering the walls, and make sure they're brand new! The chars have to be set up now, the guests are coming any minute!" Hiccup took a moment to catch his breath. For the past month, he and the Defenders had been running around the Four Worlds preparing for the first council meeting. The first meeting was to take place on the Isle of Tomorrow in the Barbaric Archipelago in the Second World. Then, it will rotate between all the Worlds. They had to pay the Witch extra to make a simple device for everyone to be able to travel between the worlds.

Hiccup took a deep breath in. "Jack, stop making it snow in the meeting hall. Rapunzel, Merida how is the food coming?"

Rapunzel walked out holding plates of cookies in her hands and balancing them on her head. Pascal helped to keep it aloft. "We're finishing up over here, Hiccup," she said.

"Are you sure you want me to cook?" asked Merida. "The last time I put something together, and that was just making some drinks, got my Mum turned into a bear."

"I'll worry about that later," Hiccup hastily replied as he left the kitchen and helped Rapunzel take one of the plates off her. Merida followed from behind, carrying a tray holding mugs. The three headed for the meeting hall. Inside, Jack had just finished putting up the tapestries. "We're all set."

"Good," Hiccup wheezed as the girls settled the food on the large squared table. Each side was branded with a symbol and a streak of color. A blue line and a snowflake for the First World. The Strike Class crest with a green marking for the Second. A sword and three rings accompanied by orange for the Third, and a purple mark of the sun for the Fourth. A single side also held three chairs. Three representatives for each of the Worlds.

"Why do we have to be part of this council?" Jack muttered. "You know me. Snow balls and fun times, not sit in a room and talk."

"Just don't create a blizzard in here," said Hiccup.

"I bet you he can't do that," Merida teased.

"Would you like me to try?" Jack smirked.

"Guys!" Rapunzel interjected. "They're here!"

The Defenders stopped bickering and hurriedly fixed up their outfits. Toothless, who was napping soundly in a corner popped open an eye to check the situation. Hiccup slid into the chair on the green side of the table, right in the center. Jack got into his seat and placed his staff beside the table. Merida sat down at the chair with a bow, and Rapunzel went straight towards the entrance hall.

Walking through the large doors of the hall was the King of Corona, and Eugene. Rapunzel threw herself into her husband's arms before leading her crew inside. One by one, the council members stepped through the entrance and took their respective seats at the table.

From the first world: North, Jack and Toothiana. From the second: Stoick, Hiccup and Astrid. The Third had Merida, Fergus and Elinor. And finally, Rapunzel, her father and Eugene from the fourth.

Everyone exchanged friendly yet formal handshakes and greetings. By the time everyone was seated, North patted Jack on the back. "Good work, Jack! You make us proud."

Grinning, Jack stood up from his seat. Hiccup, Merida and Rapunzel did the same. "We declare the first meeting of the Archaic Kingsâ€¦"

â€"â€"â€"â€"â€"â€"â€"â€"â€"â€"â€"â€"â€"â€"â€"â€"â€"â€"â€"

12. Epilogue

****Epilogue****

The palace of Corona was bustling with life. The market and kingdom itself was flourishing with hundreds and hundreds of guests, most of them not even native to the area. Stoick had gone ahead and went straight to the castle as soon as they arrived. Gobber had been checking out the blacksmiths and the stables, keeping the dragons from Berk under control. Snotlout and Fishlegs were browsing through the plaza, tasting some of Corona's delicacies.

"Just let him go, Fishlegs," said Snotlout. "You know Hiccup only gets to see some of his friends once a year." Snotlout brought out some coins and gave them to a shopkeeper in exchange for some bread. "But honestly, did he have to take Astrid?"

"I know that. But he's really showing off, you know."

"Hiccup, Astrid, you're here," Rapunzel cheered, running up to her friends. Hiccup and Rapunzel shared a quick hug before he shook Eugene's hand. "Good to see you again. How's your swordsmanship?"

"It's nothing too much, really." Eugene nudged Hiccup by the arm. "I haven't had a good spar lately. I would like a round after the meeting."

Beside them, Rapunzel gently placed a hand on Astrid's abdomen. "How many months?"

"Eight," Astrid replied. "Stoick was really happy when we told him

the good news."

Hiccup laughed and joined the conversation. "He's been telling me to settle down and raise a family five years ago. Speaking of which, is it hard raising a kid?"

Rapunzel thought of her answer for a moment. "Rosanna wasn't that hard. Though the first two years were very exhausting."

"Sleepless nights all around," Eugene grumbled.

Merida materialized at the door, her hand holding a small child. "Rapunzel," she called, walking over, "Rosanna's calling for you."

A young girl dressed in magenta with long brown hair ran up to Rapunzel. Laughing, she took her daughter's hand. "Six years old and still counting."

Rosanna peered behind Hiccup's legs and noticed Toothless. The dragon looked at her with adorable large eyes. "Mommy, can I go play with Toothless?"

"Go ahead, honey," said Rapunzel. Beaming cutely, Rosanna walked over to Toothless, and the Night Fury gave her his signature toothless smile.

Hiccup chuckled. "Rosanna just loves playing with Toothless."

"Kids," Merida muttered. "I'm still on the fence on getting one."

"Why don't you get a husband first?" Jack's voice came from the skies as he landed on the balcony. Merida shot the winter spirit an annoyed look. Running up the stairs behind Jack was Jamie, surprising Hiccup, Merida and Rapunzel.

"Hey guys," said Jamie, wheezing from the long walk up the steps. "I'm taking North's seat on the council today." The boy was much taller now, and was wearing a casual polo shirt and dark pants.

Jack stood in front of Hiccup and looked upwards, a wary expression on his face.

"What?" Hiccup asked questioningly.

"I will never get used to you being taller than me," said Jack, earning laughs from everyone else. After all these years, the winter spirit did not look any different. It had always occurred to him that he would never grow old along with his teammates. But it never bothered him. Because after all, there are friendships that transcend lifetimes.

Before he knew it, Hiccup realized that he was humming. Astrid looked at him with a curious face. "You're humming that song again?"

"What song?" asked Rapunzel.

"His mother's lullaby," Astrid replied. "Ever since he learned that we're expecting a child he's been humming it ever since."

"Wasn't it the same song that he took lines from during our battle with Pitch?" said Jack.

"Wow, it seems so long ago now," Merida added.

"It is," said Hiccup, pausing the song for a moment. "But as long as the Four Worlds are together, we can stand up against any adversary."

As Hiccup resumed the lullaby, Jack, Merida, Rapunzel and Astrid joined in. The soft singing of their voices echoed atop the palace mezzanine. It was a song that helped lifted their hearts and brought them through tough times.

I didn't mean to come here

And I didn't mean to stay

It's just where the wind blew me

One accidental day

The hero cares not for a winter storm

It carries him swift on the back of waves_

All may be lost and our hearts may be worn_

But a hero fights forever

Hiccup's mother would always be with him. Just like how Jack knows that his friends, no matter how long they've passed on, will stand by him. Because everyone lives on in the hearts of others.

End

[illegible]

This story is finally finished! (fanfare) I am so proud. This is my largest fanfiction project to date, and I hope you've enjoyed it as much as I have enjoyed writing it. This concludes the _Defenders of Realms_ series. Thank you for everyone who had read, followed, reviewed or even checked out this story. You guys are awesome.

****IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT ****(25/11/14): As of today, a sequel trilogy has been green lit. However, I will push back the publication date to May 2015, to celebrate the 2 year anniversary of the Defenders of Realms. I will see you all then.

PS: This epilogue will now take place in a different timeline to the sequel series.

Keep writing and reading until next time!

~ Kyra

End
file.